

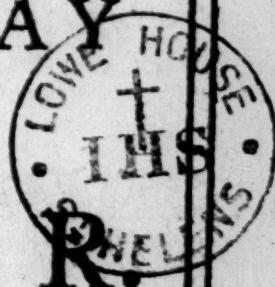
Practical ^{True & Honest} Reflections

FOR

EVERY DAY

Throughout the

YEAR



The SEVENTH EDITION:

To which is added,

A BRIEF METHOD OF
MEDITATION.

L O N D O N:

Printed in the Year MDCCLXVIII.



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THE P R E F A C E.

THE Esteem which this little Book hath justly obtained in the Christian World for it's Piety and Usefulness, and the great Scarcity of Copies from former Impressions, are deemed a sufficient Apology for offering to the Public this new Edition. Not the least Alteration hath been attempted by the Editor, as to the Substance, or even the Letter of the Work, (unless perhaps in correcting the Errors of the Press) so that if is sent forth under the same Form in which it first appeared; with this Difference only, that, in order to encourage and facilitate the Use of the Book, it was thought necessary to premise a few Words on the Nature and Benefits of Meditation, and to subjoin an easy approved Method of performing it.

There is no Point in which Christians seem more generally agreed, than in the Acknowledgment of their own Weakness and Inability to do Good. This is a Truth that is

not only taught them by Revelation, but is brought home to them by their own daily sad Experience. Whoever considers himself as a fallen Creature, corrupt in Heart, perverse in Will, and blind in Understanding, scarce needs to be told, that *without Christ he can do nothing,* (John xv. 5.) And that it is the Grace and Spirit of God which worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, according to his Good Will, (Phil. ii. 13.) But tho' this be true, yet it is no less certain, that "in him " who strengthens us we are able to do all " Things :" And that God is always ready to grant his Good Spirit to them that ask it; altho' therefore we are of ourselves " wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," (Apoc. iii. 17.) are beset with Temptations, and have powerful Enemies to struggle with, yet it is our own Fault if we do not resist and conquer them all, by engaging the Help and Power of God on our Sides, by means of frequent and devout Prayer. " Our Help is in the Name of the Lord," (Psalm 124.) And if on any Occasion we have it not, " it is because we ask not, (Jam. iv. 2.) hence we are commanded to pray always, &c. (Eph. vi. 18.)

Now Meditation or mental Prayer is, of all others, the most useful, the best adapted to our Exigencies, the most worthy of the divine Nature, and most suitable to our own;

The P R E F A C E. v

it is hereby we worship God in Spirit and Truth; we summon every Faculty and Affection of our Souls to praise the Lord, and call forth " all that is within us to bless his " holy Name."

It is not easy to determine whence it comes to pass, that a great Number of Christians, instead of being familiarized with the Practice of Meditation, are quite stranged from, and in a Manner averse to it; not enduring to approach the Lord or speak to him, otherwise than in in a stated, pre-composed Form of Words ; without the Help of which they pretend that their Attention is divided and broken, and their Devotion damped and lost. Now, altho' set Formularies of Prayers, uttered solemnly and feelingly, with a devout Warmth and Earnestness, may make good Impressions on the Mind, yet great Caution is necessary for the Generality of Christians, lest they accustom themselves to recite Syl-lables and Sentences, unaccompanied with the Consent of the Heart, and the Assent of the Mind towards God. And this (such is the Infirmity of human Nature) it is to be feared is too often the Case: Whereas daily Meditation in some Measure remedies this Evil, or at least lessens the Frequency of it, by inuring the Mind to a fixed Regard to the Object and Subject of our Prayers, and to a due Intention and Vigour of Thought.

God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in Spirit, with all the Powers of our Mind; so that they who lift up their Hands to him, without elevating their Hearts, instead of adoring, affront him: The Devotion of the Tongue, without that of the Heart, can never be acceptable to God, how long soever continued, or how often soever repeated. Indeed such Devotion is neither fit for God to receive, nor Man to pay. Let no one then imagine that he can impose upon God, as he sometimes may upon Man, by a meer Form of Godliness, without the Power of it. When therefore we retire or begin to say our Prayers, let us take heed always not to incur that Reproach of our dear Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees, “ This People honoureth me with “ their Lips, but their Heart is far from me.”

The charitable Reader will not interpret any Thing here said, to glance upon the Use of vocal Prayer, or in any wise to derogate from a Practice ordained by the divine Wisdom of Jesus Christ, and rendered sacred by his Example; much less will he conceive what he reads, as tending to promote the Use of Meditation in Preference and in Prejudice to the great Duty of public Worship, or Attendance in Church, at the adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, on Days appointed: For vocal Prayer is no longer blamed, than when Christians turn it into a mock Worship, and make

make it a meer Form or Farce of Devotion, by pretending to recite frequent and long Prayers, with their Thoughts wandering on vain and foreign Objects; or by resorting to Church to worship God merely with their Lips and Knees, and not "with all their "Hearts, with all their Souls, with all their "Minds, and with all their Strength." And the Use of mental Prayer is so far from being a Motive for any one to withdraw himself from publick Worship, that it is a Means for disposing and fitting him for the better Performance of it. This is so particularly true in Regard of the daily Sacrifice of the Altar, that it is hard to imagine how any Person, without Meditation, can reap due Fruit from it. For unless we be careful to understand the Nature of the Offering, and be diligent in meditating on it, then, instead of enjoying the mighty Benefits and Blessings with which they are replenished who duly assist at it, we shall probably do little more than wander and be distracted from the Beginning to the End. If therefore we would perform a reasonable Service, and not offer a Sacrifice of Fools, we should accustom ourselves to the Exercise of mental Prayer, which alone can dispose and enable us to turn to the best Account our Devotions both public and private, at Church and in our Closets.

Surely no one will imagine that an Exercise so profitable, and even necessary for the Good

viii The P R E F A C E.

of his Soul, is too sublime for his Talents, or placed above his Reach. It is hoped that when the Method hereafter laid down shall be carefully perused and attended to, no Person of the meanest Capacity will be discouraged from endeavouring, at least to comprehend: And it may be safely affirmed, that no one ever seriously endeavoured to attain the Use of Meditation, who yet failed of Success.

A more particular Objection, perhaps, against the Duty here recommended, is, that it takes up too much Time: An Objection not a whit more reasonable than the former; and the Partizans of it might, with equal Justice, pretend that they have not Time to work out their Salvation. For what is the main Inlet to Perdition, and the great Cause of the Desolation of the whole World, but the Want of Consideration, or the Neglect of that Meditation which is here spoken of? This is the Source to which every lost Soul may ascribe its Ruin; as, on the contrary, to the constant Use of so powerful a Means of Holiness may be attributed the Origin of that Happiness the Saints have arrived to. We need seek for no other Cause of the Difference between good and bad Men: The latter live unmindful of God and Eternity, and rolling on in a Circle of vain empty Pursuits, are delivered over continually from one slight Amusement to another, without a single useful

ful Thought on the only one Thing necessary. Thus a perpetual Dissipation lays them open to every Impression, every Attempt of the subtle Enemy of their Souls; and their Minds are so violently successively agitated with Suggestions and Temptations, that they have scarce Opportunity, or Strength, or rather not the Inclination to withstand them. Whereas the just, contemplative Man is an utter Enemy to a vain, roving, distracted Course of Life, which he looks upon to be the Root of Sin and Iniquity; sensible for his Part, that he is inclined to Evil from his Youth, and knowing that he lives in the Midst of Evil, and that he is attacked from without, and betrayed from within, he prepares for his Christian Warfare, by having Recourse to the Armour of Faith, that is, to Meditation on the powerful Truths Religion teaches him: He makes it his Business frequently to converse with God in Prayer, whence he derives an Assistance which renders him victorious over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Every true Christian, who emulates a like Victory, and desires sincerely to be ranked with the Just, will apply himself affectionately and invariably to the great Duty of Meditation; and all the Time he spends herein, he will judge it to be employed to the Purpose for which it is most especially given him, *viz.* to the working out his eternal Salvation. Hence he will deem the Man unworthy the Name of a Christian

stian, who shall be so immersed in the Affairs of this World, as not to be able to get from them now and then, to mind the Concerns of another; particularly as he himself will be convinced by Experience, that a reasonable Attention to this holy Exercise is so far from interfering with the Duties his Sphere of Life engages him in, that it renders him more apt and diligent in a due Discharge of them.---- God grant such may be the Sentiments and Conviction of all who take this Book in Hand: May they, as they tender the Salvation of their immortal Souls, esteem, cherish, and promote the salutary and efficacious Means of accomplishing it; and for this Purpose resolve, as far as in them lies, never to let even one Day pass without redeeming some small Portion of it from the Hurry of Busness, and the Allurements of Pleasure, to be consecrated to God, and their Souls, in holy Meditation.

A BRIEF

A BRIEF METHOD OF MEDITATION,

Delivered by Way of
QUESTION and ANSWER,

And digested on the Plan of
The most Excellent and Pious
ASCETICS.

C H A P. I.

Of the Nature of MEDITATION.

Quest. *W*HAT is Meditation?

Ansf. It is a serious ruminating on, pondering and considering and treating familiarly with God Almighty by means of the Powers of the Soul, about some Mystery of Faith, of the Life and Death of our dear Redeemer, in order to draw Spiritual Documents whereby to regulate our Lives.

Q. Which are the Powers of the Soul to be exercised?

A. Memory, Understanding and Will.

Q. In

Q. In what consists the Exercise of the Memory?

A. In recalling to Mind the Subjects we are to meditate on, digested into Parts and Points, as Circumstances require.

Q. What are the Operations of the Understanding in regard to the Subject one meditates on?

*A. Now and then they are simple Apprehensions, as when one strives in a lively Manner to apprehend what is contained in this Idea, *Good, Good God!* or in this, *Eternity, Happy, or Miserable Eternity!* Now and then they are fixed Judgments; as, *God is great, God alone is to be loved and feared. I come from God alone, therefore I must serve God alone. The World is in an Error, therefore I am in the Wrong to believe it.**

Q. In what consists the Exercise of the Will?

A. It consists in embracing or shunning, being affected to, or conceiving a Horror of Things, as the Understanding represents them in Meditation, good or bad, profitable or dangerous, amiable or hateful.

Q. How is the Will worked up in Meditation?

A. To make Purposes and Resolutions, in which consists the Use of Prayer.

C H A P. II.

Of PREPARATION to Prayer.

Q. *IS any Preparation required to Prayer?*

A. Yes, before Prayer, prepare your Soul.

Q. *What Preparation is required to Prayer?*

A. An habitual and an actual one, the actual one is divided into a remote and immediate Preparation of the Memory.----We will treat of each apart.

Q. *What is the habitual Preparation?*

A. It is to efface as much as may be, the Memory of those Things we have seen or heard before we entered into Religion or engaged in the Practice of a pious Life, and to substitute others in their Place, capable to call back our Minds to holy Things. To this will contribute the frequent reading of pious Books, Silence and Recollection, &c. and above all a fixed Resolution of never moving ourselves with unprofitable, much less dangerous, Thoughts. What has been said of the Memory, with much more Reason may be applyed to the Imagination, which is a kind of material Memory, and furnishes Matter of Reflection to the Memory, which is a Faculty inherent in the Soul. Exterior Solicitude and Retirement will avail little, unless joined with the interior. In speaking to ourselves, or with ourselves, we loose, or gain more, or less, as much as speaking with others,

others, we should get a habit of speaking interiorly to God, and exteriorly but of God.

Q. What is the habitual Disposition of the Understanding?

A. It is to accustom ourselves to reason right and solidly upon Things as they occur, without being amused with outward Appearances, or carried away by Opinion, or prejudiced like Children, or simple and ignorant People. We cannot reason justly, unless we ground ourselves on solid Principles of Faith and Religion, which Principles, as well as the Consequences drawn from them, remain unchangeable, and practise the contrary, and contradict them by their Actions.

Q. How is the Will habitually prepared?

A. By accustoming one's self to a sincere and fixed Resolution to save our Soul and aim at Perfection; for though Prayer helps very much this Resolution, it presupposes it notwithstanding, in great Measure at least, and implies a Desire to do well, and give himself with Heart and Good-will to Prayer, which is one, if not the chiefest Means to Perfection: It is from this Determination, more or less fixed or strong, that naturally as it were, arise in Prayer, Affections of Admiration, Fear, Hope, Love, when one considers what is lost or gained by Fervour or Tepidity in the Service of God. In a Word, the stricter Guard one has over these three Powers out of Prayer, the better he is remotely prepared to pray.

Of

Of the REMOTE Preparation to Prayer.

Q. *In what consists the remote Preparation to Prayer?*

A. *First*, read diligently the Meditation over Night ; take a cursory View how you may reason upon each Part of the Mystery, Point, or Truth ; see what Affections will naturally arise from such Reasonings or Reflections ; and what Resolutions from these Affections. *2dly*, Just before you compose yourself to Sleep, reflect for the Space of an *Ave*, at what Time you are to rise, and what is to be the Subject of your Morning Prayer. *3dly*, when you are called in the Morning, make the Sign of the Cross, and having lifted up your Heart to God, imminently turn your Mind to the Subject of your Meditation, striving to dispose it thereunto, by some congruous Thought, or familiar Comparison, &c. We may also sometimes imagine, we are called to be Spectators of the Mystery we are to meditate upon.

Of the IMMEDIATE Preparation.

Q. *What is the immediate Preparation to Prayer?*

A. By immediate Preparation to Prayer, I understand a methodical entering upon that great Duty, and not to leave Things to hazard : This will help much to perform it

it well, keep out Distractions, and point out distinctly the Fruit we desire to draw from the present Meditation, or Exercise of the three Powers of the Soul.

Q. Teach me this methodical Way of beginning my Prayer?

A. When the Time allotted for it approaches, stand in a respectful Posture a Step or two from your praying Place, waiting as it were until you are admitted into the Presence Chamber of the King of Heaven, there to have Audience to lay open to him your Wants, and lodge your Petition. The Moment the Sign is given, or the Clock strikes, cast yourself on your Knees, and with a lively Act of Faith adore Almighty God; there present, with profound Humility; address him with the Prophet, *Lequar ad Dominum cum sim pulvis et cinis*; I will make bold to hold Conversation with my Lord, though I am nothing but Dust and Ashes.

Q. How many Ways do we usually put ourselves in the Presence of God?

A. Four Ways, chiefly: *First*, By looking upon God intimately present to all created Things, and ourselves in God as a Spunge in the Water, which is filled, penetrated and environed with the same, as a Fish in the Sea, a Bird in the Air, or Water in a Vessel. God is our Vessel, says the Apostle; in him we live, move, and are; and should he cease to converse with us in our respective Beings,

we

we should run into our original Nothing, like Water, when the Vessel is broke that contained it. *Secondly*, By looking upon him with the Eyes of Faith, as united to our Soul by Grace, and as it were the Soul of our Soul, which cannot subsist without him. *Thirdly*, By a lively Imagination, contemplating *Jesus Christ* seated in Heaven on a Throne of Glory, at the Right-hand of God the Father, casting his Eyes on all Men, and those in particular who humble themselves before him in devout Prayer ; minutely observing and marking in the Book of Life their Diligence or Negligence in that Duty. *Fourthly*, Contemplating with him in a human Shape ; conversing again among us, with a grave, venerable and majestic Air ; any one of these will do : That is best which brings the least Constraint. And when we make our Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, it is useless to contemplate God any other way present, than as he really is in the Altar before us. Having placed yourself in the Presence of God, any of the foregoing Ways, make next your *preparatory Prayer* : O my God you have allowed me this present Hour to praise you, grant me your holy Grace, that all the Powers of my Soul may concur during the same, to adore and love you, who are infinitely amiable, and infinitely worthy to be what you are. *Amen.*

B

Q. *What*

Q. What is to be done after the preparatory Prayer?

A. Proceed to the Preludes, which are an immediate Introduction to the Exercise of the three Powers.

Q. How many Preludes to Prayer are there?

A. Sometimes three; always two.

Q. In what does the first Prelude consist?

A. In turning over the Mystery we meditate on.

Q. What is the second Prelude?

A. Composition of Place: This well performed is designed, and helps very much, to keep us from Distractions. 1st. If the Mystery falls within the Reach of our Senses, as the Nativity, Crucifixion, &c. imagine yourself in the Stable of Bethlehem, or upon Mount Calvary, where these Mysteries were performed; or rather imagine them actually performing in the Place where you are, seeing, as it were, and remarking each Person, Circumstance, Word, and Action. In like manner, if your Meditation be on Death, imagine yourself on your Death-bed, given over by the Physicians, a blessed Candle by your Pillow, a Crucifix on your Breast, &c. such Representations, besides shutting out Distractions, help much to excite in us Sentiments for the Love of God, Sorrow for Sins, Fear, &c. according to the different Subjects we meditate upon. This Composition of Place must be used with Discretion; too great an Attention

tention to these corporeal Imaginations drives the Strains of the Head, and robs the Understanding of good Part of the Force it stands in need of, to make Reflections and draw Conclusions.

Q. What is the third Prelude?

A. To beg the Fruit we propose to draw from the present Meditation, viz. the Practice of that Virtue, or Virtues, or the Horror of that Vice, the Mystery or Meditation chiefly points at.

Q. Which of these Preludes, and when, is sometimes to be omitted?

A. The first is to be omitted when the Subject we meditate upon is not historical, nor affords any sensible Ideas to the Mind, like those we mentioned of Death and Judgment.

Q. When we meditate upon some Sentence out of the Holy Scripture, how are the Preludes to be made?

A. The first is to imagine we hear the Sentence or Truth inculcated to us by the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, or our good Angel, &c. The second, to beg the Fruit which the Sentence points out, and we desire to draw from it.

C H A P. III.

Meditation, or the actual Exercise of the three Powers of the Soul in Prayer.

Q. *T*HE preparatory Prayer and Preludes being performed, what is next to be done?

A. I then enter upon my Prayer by the actual Exercise of the three Powers of the Soul, to which these were only a methodical Introduction.

Q. Which of the three Powers is first used?

A. The Memory.

Q. How is the Memory exercised in Prayer?

A. The Memory produces and lays open what had been deposited there over-night in the Preparation; and for that Purpose curiously run over them in the Morning. It begins by the first Point we are to meditate upon, proposing it to the Understanding, which receives it with a firm and stedfast Faith of the Mystery or Truth therein contained.

Q. What is the Office of the Understanding in Prayer?

A. As the Memory suggests the Mystery or Truth to the Understanding; so the Understanding, weighing and considering the same, draws from it practical Conclusions, and spiritual Documents, suitable to the Circumstances we are in, and proposes them to the Will, that it may raise Reflections and take Resolutions accordingly.

Q. Explain more at large how this is done?

A. The

A. The Understanding, for Example, reasons thus: The Virtue I meditate on ought to be practised by me, or this Vice or Imperfection ought to be avoided: First, Because my last End, or the End of my Vocation requires it. 2dly, Because I shall, on my Death, on the last Day, and for a whole Eternity, wish to have done it. 3dly, Because I should counsel my best Friend to do so. 4thly, Because the Saints have done so. 5thly, Because Christ hath taught it by his Example, and it is my greatest Happiness to be like him. 6thly, Because it is honourable, profitable, and easy. By some or all these or the like Reflections, Reasonings, and Conclusions, the Understanding disposes the Will to love or hate, desire or shun the Virtue or Vice in Question, and takes its Resolutions accordingly.

Q. When the Virtue or Vice contains some Difficulty, how must the Will work itself up to the desired Resolutions?

A. By repeating and dwelling on the Affections raised in the Soul, so long, till the said Difficulty diminishes, or is quite conquered.

Q. Explain a little more minutely what these Affections are?

A. These Affections are of two Sorts, and arise from the irascible and concupiscent Powers of the Soul.

Q. *What, and how many Affections or Motions of the Will arise from the concupiscent Power?*

A. They are six: 1. Of Love. 2. Of Desire. 3. Joy. 4. Hatred. 5. Aversion. 6. Sorrow.

Q. *Which are those formed in the irascible Power?*

A. They are five: 1. Hope. 2. Boldness. 3. Despondency. 4. Fear. 5. Anger.

Q. *What do these Affections operate in the Soul?*

A. When I love any Thing, I presently desire it; and when I have it, I rejoice; what I procure to shun or avoid, if I cannot, Sorrow succeeds: I hope to get it, and with Courage boldly attempt it. If Difficulties be great, I fear the Success; and often, if not encouraged, I despond and desist: Anger arises against what is hurtful or prejudicial.

Q. *Is it not a good Method in Prayer, to make frequent Acts of the Virtue proposed to us in the Subject we meditate upon?*

A. This will doubtless render our Prayer fruitful, and help us to spend a great deal of Time in it very agreeably, if we dwell on those repeated Acts, till the Will is thoroughly disposed to take the desired Resolution. You may say the same of Sorrow and Detestation of Sin.

Q. *But Beginners are often at a loss to frame these Acts?*

A. They

A. They would do well to have a Catalogue of these Virtues by them, to read them over sometimes, and, in their remote Preparation, fix upon that which their ensuing Meditation drives at.

Q. *What is the Operation of the Will in Prayer?*

A. It is to frame Purposes and Resolutions suitable to our present Circumstances ; in which Resolutions consists the Fruit of Prayer, and without which all Prayer will be steril, and without Use and Benefit.

Q. *How are these Resolutions to be formed in Prayer?*

A. We often form them, first in general : But this will be of little Effect, unless we descend to Particulars.

Q. *How, from general Resolutions, do we descend to Particulars ?*

A. After this, or such like Manner ; as, O my God, I firmly believe all that you have revealed to the holy Catholic Church ; but particularly, eternal God, your real Presence in the most blessed Eucharist, and am ready to die for that Article of Faith. O my God, I love all for your Sake, because you command me to do so ; but particularly that Person who vexed and offended me. O my God, I will avoid all Sin for Love of you ; but particularly that of Lying, I am subject to. O my God, I conceive a great Desire to practice all Virtues, but particularly Humility,

which you have taught me by your Example, and bid me learn of you, &c.

Q. Is this enough to render our Resolutions efficacious?

A. We ought to determine with ourselves, when, how, how often, where, and with whom we may practise this Virtue, or avoid this Vice.

Q. Our Resolutions thus fixed, what remains else to be done?

A. Nothing else: This done proceed to the second Point, which you must treat after the same Manner, and after that to the third Point, till the Time allotted for Prayer be ended; being always more sollicitous to pray well, than to pray much, or run over many Points.

C H A P. IV. *Of the COLLOQUY.*

Q. WHAT is the last Point of Prayer?

A. A Colloquy or Petition.

Q. What is meant by Colloquy?

A. A Prayer or Petition, with redoubled Fervour, addressed to God Almighty, or to his Saints, whence it is called a Colloquy or speaking with. In this we beg in express Terms those Things which in Prayer we saw necessary or desireable for us: In this Colloquy we may move God Almighty to grant us our Petition: First, On his Side; intreating

ing him by his Divine Attributes and Perfections. *Secondly*, On the Part of *Christ*, by representing his Merits, the Mysteries of his Life and Death, his Virtues of Obedience, Suffering, Poverty, Humility, Patience, &c. his Offices of Redeemer, Mediator, Pastor, Master, &c. *3dly*, On the Part of the *Holy Ghost*, conjuring him by his Divine Love. *4thly*, *On our Parts*; laying open our extreme Poverty, Necessity, Frailty, &c. Sometimes it may be made, as a Son to a Father, a lost Sinner to his merciful Redeemer, a sick Man to his Physician, a Disciple to his Master, as a Beggar, an Orphan; sometimes as a *Magdalen* weeping at the Feet of Christ; as the *Cananean* Woman calling after him; as the Publican striking his Breast; as the Leper, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean;" with the blind Man, "Lord, that I may see;" with the *Samaritan*, asking Living Water that springs up to Life everlasting; with the Prodigal Son, sighing out, I will arise and go to my Father, &c. Father I have sinned against Heaven, and I am not worthy to be called your Son: Sometimes it is made to the Saints, and in particular to the Blessed Mother of God, with tender Affections and a great Confidence in her powerful Mediation and Protection.

Q. Shew me by an Example how to frame my Colloquy at the End of Meditation?

A. In

A. In this or the like Manner, differing as the Subject is different. I know, O Lord, that you desire not the Death, but the Life of a Sinner, by that precious Death, therefore, you underwent for Sinners. I beseech you not to punish my past Sins by permitting me to fall into new Ones. O Blessed Mother of God, Mother of Mercy, by your powerful Intercession avert from me a Hardness of Heart, the worst of Punishments; let me rather die and descend alive into Hell, sooner than sin any more, and offend my merciful Redeemer.

Q. Is there any Thing to be added after the Colloquy, before you rise from Prayer?

A. After the last Colloquy, say a *Pater Noster*, *Ave*, or some short Prayer, and so conclude the Meditation.

Q. Why do you say after the last Colloquy?

A. Because it is adviseable to make Colloquies at the End of each Point or Consideration, as it suits each one's Devotion; but never to be omitted at the End of all.

C H A P. V.

Of the REVIEW after Meditation.

Q. **H**OW is this Review to be made?

A. Sitting, or standing, or walking, for the Space of about a Quarter of an Hour: Examine how the Meditation succeeded,

ceeded, whether well, ill, or indifferent; how the Remote and Immediate Preparations were performed; how the preparatory Prayer and Prelude succeeded, if the Memory gave a faithful Account to the Understanding of each Point and Circumstance; if the Understanding reasoned on each Point, and excited the Will by different Motives; if the Will produced Reflections and Resolutions, and what were these; if the Petition and Colloquies were made with redoubled Fervour, and addressed to Almighty God or his Saints, especially at the End; if Fervour and Devotion, or Tepidity reigned through the whole, and why. What in this Review you find rightly performed, resolve to continue so the next Time; what faulty and deficient, resolve to correct. It is adviseable, while we make this Review, to collect and write down our Fruits of Prayer. Under the Notion of Fruits of Prayer, are understood, Tears of Devotion, interior Lights, and good Purposes; write them down in a Book, to be shewn to none but your Director: The Time of your writing them is, during the Review or immediately after; let them be short, and in this or the like Manner; considering I was moved to Tears of Devotion, I was moved to desire my continual Mortification; considering God takes an infinite Satisfaction in whatever he orders or permits, I was moved

moved to rejoice at whatever happens, &c. &c.
Read over these Fruits and Purposes on
Communion Days, or set Times, to see how
you keep them, and profit by them: These
Fruits like Treasures should be laid up safe.

C H A P. VI.

*Of ARIDITIES, and DESOLATIONS
in Prayer.*

Q. *WHAT would you advise those who com-
plain they are dry, and want Matter
to entertain themselves with during Prayer?*

A. Let them run over the following Circumstances, intermixing short Affections, lest otherwise they produce little or no Fruit. *Quis? Quid? Cui? Ubi? Quibus Auxiliis? Quo Fruſtu? Cur? Quomodo? Quando?* As *Quis*, Who the Person that acts? *Cui*, To whom the Action is directed? *Ubi*, Where it is performed? *Quibus Auxiliis*, The Means employed in the Action? *Cur*, Wherefore, or, to what End? *Quomodo*, The Manner, Intention, and Fervour? *Quando*, The Time when performed?

Q. *When I meditate upon an historical Sub-
ject, Mystery, or Parable, how must I apply the
said Particles? And how, when I meditate on
some Virtue or Vice, some Sentence of Holy Scrip-
ture, or some eternal Truth?*

A. Who,

A. Who, may denote the Nature of the Virtue or Vice, with its Definition: *What*, the good or bad Effects thereof, with its Objects: *Where*, the Place it may be practised or avoided in: *Quo Fructu*, the Profit or Loss of those that practice it: *Wherefore*, the End for which it should be practised or avoided: *How*, the Intenseness, Fervour, Intention, Facility, Difficulty, and Constancy in avoiding or practising it: *When*, the Time it is to be avoided or practised in.

Q. Is there any Method to enlarge on the Subject we meditate upon?

A. When Matter fails, apply the five Senses thus: Imagine you see, hear, taste, smell, or touch the Persons who practise that Virtue or Vice; its sweet Odour, or the contrary; their interior Joy, Anguish, or Remorse, &c. intermixing Affections or Resolutions, as in considering the Circumstances above-mentioned. This Application of the Senses may be made on any Subject we meditate on, when Matter fails. For Example: To a just Man, or a Sinner, dying, dead, and judged: To the former in Heaven, or Purgatory, to the latter in Hell, &c.

C H A P. VII.

Of DISTRACTIONS, and their Remedies.

Q. *D*OES it equally depend on us to attend to our Meditation when at it, as to come to it well prepared?

A. With our diligent Endeavours, and God's holy Assistance, we may avoid voluntary Distractions.

Q. *How may Distractions be divided?*

A. First, From our Passion being apt to think of what we love or desire. 2dly, From a natural Levity. 3dly, From God's Providence, sent us for a Trial.

Q. *How may these Distractions arising from Passion be prevented?*

A. By moderating our Desires, and by getting a Custom not to give ourselves to the Objects of Distraction.

Q. *What Remedies can you prescribe for them when we perceive them?*

A. Some are interior; as, 1. Humble yourself at the Sight of your Distractions; and, by Humility, strive to gain what you have lost by Want of due Attention. 2. Be confounded, &c. 3. Take care of Tepidity. 4. Beg Grace by a short Elevation of your Mind to God. 5. Confide. 6. Renew the Acts of Faith and Presence of God. Exterior Remedies. 1. Quicken your Imagination. 2. Break forth into Aspirations, or short ejaculatory Prayers suitable to the Subject you meditate upon.

For

For the Sake of those Beginners, who are either unwilling or unable to charge their Memories with all the particular Instructions contained in the foregoing Chapters, a more simple and concise Method of Meditation is here added, which they may improve and perfect at their Leisure. But let them be careful, before Prayer, always to prepare their Souls, lest they be as People who tempt God.

I. WHEN they apply themselves to Meditation, let them intend seriously to promote thereby the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their Souls; considering, before they begin, the Importance of this Intention, and the Majesty of that God, in whose Presence they place themselves, and how respectfully they would behave before an earthly King, the greatest of whom are but Worms, and nothing in Comparison of the great King of Heaven and Earth.

II. When they have thus humbled themselves, they are to beg God's Grace, that their Souls may receive real Benefit from the Meditation; and that, during it, it would please his Divine Goodness to fix their Attention, enlighten their Understandings, excite their Affections, and confirm the good Resolutions.

III. They

III. They may then, in Imitation of the Saints, and of Jesus Christ, cast themselves on their Knees, or choose such becoming Posture as they find best for the Repose of their Minds; and begin to reflect on, or read over the Points of their Meditation leisurely and attentively, and with an obedient Disposition, like unto that of the Prophet *Samuel*, when he said, “ Speak, Lord, for “ thy Servant heareth.”

IV. They must be mindful to dwell most upon such Thoughts as most affect them, and make most for their Purpose; and let them consider and contrive how they may reduce their pious Resolutions to Practice, even on the very Day they are made.

V. Lastly, let them conclude by addressing themselves to God, and begging with all possible Earnestness, that the good Motions and Desires he has inspired them with, may be improved to the Amendment of their Lives, and their final Perseverance in Good.

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Practical Reflections

F O R

JANUARY and JULY.

First DAY.

On the END of MAN.

REFLECTION I.

THE End of Man is to serve God. If it were asked, where we were a hundred Years ago? our Answer would be, No where: What we were? Nothing: Who raised us out of the dark Abyss of nothing? God. And why did he do it? To the end we should serve him. For this End he has created us to the Likeness of himself; for this end he has redeemed us with the Price of his Blood; for this end he has called us to the *true Faith* from amidst Thousands who unhappily perish; pursuant to this end he infuses into our Souls the Dew of Heaven, and ceases not to heap upon us innumerable Blessings: And after all these Mercies, do we truly serve him? Don't we rather serve the *World, Vanity, and Sin*, and every thing else but our good God?

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That we were created to serve God is a Truth we have imbibed from the very Cradle; and notwithstanding this early Knowledge of our Duty, what are our Lives? Don't our Actions speak in Favour of the World? Don't its corrupt Maxims get the better of the Gospel? Ah! when we reflect how generally Mens busy Thoughts are bent upon the Follies of a deluding World; when we reflect that on all Occasions they follow the Suggestions of a depraved Nature; when we reflect how seldom they think of another Life, of God, or Heaven, what can we conclude?

O God deliver us from this unhappy Blindness; may our last and only End be ever before our Eyes, that in Love and Righteousness we may faithfully serve thee all the Days of our Lives: (Luke 1.) Grant that we walk in the Ways of thy Commandments, and that we may dread nothing more than to sin against thee.

Examine yourselves, and see how well ye have answer'd the End of your Creation. You see the End of Man is to serve God; let therefore each Thought and Action of your Lives be directed to this End: Whenever you are tempted, say to yourselves, I came into the World to serve God, and shall I offend him by a mortal Sin?

2d Day.

2d Day. On serving God.

R E F L E C T I O N II.

THERE is nothing more noble, than to serve God; to serve him is to reign: We value ourselves upon our Allegiance to our Prince; we are prepared to hazard Life and Fortune to signalize ourselves in his Service; and is not God the Greatest of Princes? We are willing to serve a good Friend, and do leave no Stone unturned for the promoting his Interest; and is not God the best of Friends? He is; therefore let us serve him: By all manner of Titles he claims a Right to our Service; consequently, it must be a notorious Injustice not to serve him. Millions are lost on the Account of this Injustice: Sweet Jesus grant it prove not our Misfortune.

When we reflect on the mortify'd Lives of *Recluses*; when we view their Poverty, Disciplines, and Hair-shiris; when we behold the Racks and Tortures of the *Martyrs*, they seem to us to be the most unfortunate People upon Earth: But, alas! how are we deceived! Under the Appearance of their seeming Miseries, they are of all the *most happy*; because God is their Comfort; because their Thoughts repose in God, who alone is able to fill their Hearts. *Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our Hearts are restless till they rest in thee.* St. Aug.

Heaven and Earth unanimously concur to the magnifying their Lord by their incessant

sant Praises; and shall we *alone* be silent in this universal Voice? O God, we will confess thy glorious Name; our Lives henceforth shall express thy Praises? we will praise thee by an utter Detestation of Sin, by an early and vigorous Application to Virtue; we will praise thee in our daily and recollected Prayers; and by frequently and worthily receiving thy Sacraments, we will praise thee by adoring thy *Body* in the Eucharist, and by an obsequious Assent to thy *undoubted* Doctrines; we will praise thee in Thought, Word and Deed; the Course of our Lives shall be a *perpetual Praise*.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your serious Resolutions; if ye have deserted the *Service* of God, return back with all Speed; be not basely enslaved to those Creatures which were created for your Service: Spend your Lives in the *Service* of your Lord; your Happiness here, and eternal Happiness hereafter, depends upon it: in order thereto, earnestly sue for the *Divine Grace*, without which you cannot move a Finger.

3d Day. *On the Dignity of a Christian.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

EVERY Christian is a *Child of God*: What Christ is by *Nature*, the Christian is by *Adoption*: By *Baptism* we receive this noble Spirit, by virtue whereof we have a Title to Heaven, and are justly qualify'd for the calling

God

God our Father. Is there any thing more honourable, than to be the Son of God? What are our Lives? Do they answer this glorious Character? Are we dutiful Children? We are in the highest manner ungrateful, if we don't obey.

The Christian, as such, is a *Member of Jesus Christ*; he is engrafted into him: We were so at *Baptism*; and are we so still? Alas! we cannot pretend it, when our Lives are so unlike that of our blessed *Original*. Where is that Self-denial, those voluntary Mortifications our *Saviour* underwent? Where is his Humility, Patience and Resignation? Where that Love of God and our Neighbour, which like a pure Fire burnt deep in his sacred Breast?

A Christian is the *living Temple of the Holy Ghost*; the *Third Person* of the Ever-blessed Trinity resides in his Heart; he infuses his Graces into his Soul; he is ready upon all Occasions to come to his Assistance; by a thousand Inspirations he minds him of Salvation. We bear the Name of *Christian*, but do we bear it in our Hearts? Are they not stained with Sin? Are they decked with Virtue? Are they a suitable Habitation for the Divine Spirit? Ah! how boundless a Mercy is it for wretched Man to be raised to the Dignity of the Son of God; of a *Member and Brother* of Jesus Christ; of the *living Temple* of the Holy Ghost! O *Christian Heart*, be mindful of thy Dignity; and since thou art elevated to the *Participation of the Divine Nature*,

never degenerate by an unworthy Conversation.
St. Leo.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chiefest Care faithfully to correspond with the *Dignity of a Christian*: The *Character of Christian* will avail you nothing, if your Lives are *unchristian*; it will rather serve to your greater Condemnation.

4th Day. *On the Duties of a Christian.*

REFLECTION II.

Decline from Evil, and do Good. (Psal. 33.) In these few Words of the Royal Prophet is comprehended the whole Duty of a Christian. *Decline from Evil*: Nothing renders us Enemies to God, and Slaves to the Devil; nothing robs us of Heaven, and involves us for ever in the Fire of Hell, but the unhappy Evil Sin. God is our Father; and can we rebel against him! Dare we poor Wretches fly in the Face of an uncontrollable Majesty! Christ is our Brother? and shall we trample under Foot that precious Blood he has so lovingly shed for us! The Holy Ghost is our Guest; and shall we banish him from our Hearts by a mortal Sin! Ah! let it not be said we ever proved thus ungrateful!

Do Good. There is no going to Heaven without good Works: *Faith is dead without them*, (Jam. 20.) and can never save us, unless it works by Charity in Jesus Christ. (Gal. 5.)

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The Christian therefore must do Good ; he must embrace Virtue ; he must be *humble of Heart* ; since none but such are acceptable to God : And surely our manifold Weaknesses, our Insufficiency in every thing, are Motives convincing for the laying a solid Foundation of *Humility*. The Christian must be *patient* ; it is in his *Patience* *he is to possess his Soul.* (Luke 21.) Alas ! has not our innocent Lord suffered more than we either do, or can ; Do not our loud Transgressions justly importune us patiently to undergo a hundred times more than we have already done ?

The Christian must be *chaste, meek, and poor*, even in the midst of Riches ; *Christ himself* has pronounced them *Blessed.* (Mat. 5.) It is his Duty to be in *Charity* with every Neighbour, else he cannot be his *Disciple.* (John 13.) How can we fail in the Love of our *Neighbour*, when we consider he is the Image of our Great God, redeemed by the sacred Blood of his Son, Fellow-Member with us, and our own Flesh ?

Examine yourselves, and resolve duly to comply with these Christian Obligations. If a *deceitful World* labours to seduce you, tell it you are a *Christian*, and such you'll die : If *Self-love* and your *Passions* press strongly upon you, matter them not ; tell them they must be curbed ; tell them you are a *Soldier of Jesus Christ.*

5th Day. On the Character of a Christian.

REFLECTION III.

EVERY Christian is a *religious Person* of the best of Orders, which is that of Jesus Christ: He has a Rule, a Habit, a Founder; he has Vows and Exercises. Christ is the *Founder* of the Christian's *Order*; Innocence and Sanctity make up the *Habit*; the Promises he made at Baptism are his solemn *Vows*; the Gospel his *Rule*; Prayer, Penance, and good Works, are his regular *Exercises*. Can we say they are ours, when our Lives are so irregular, and so full of Failings? When we indulge ourselves even to a Sin, and are negligently slothful in the way of Virtue?

The good Christian *contemns the World*: He takes no Pleasure in employing his Thought in the Affairs of this Life: He is like a banish'd Man in a foreign Country, who impatiently longs for a Sight of the Place which gave him Birth: He is never dejected at adverse Fortune, nor fondly puffed up with the Sweets of Prosperity; the *Loss of his Goods* is no Affliction to him, because he well considers he came naked into the World, and so shall he leave it: The *vain Desires of Honour* seize not his Heart, because his *Conversation* is in Heaven: No Injury or Affront is capable of provoking him, for he is a *good Christian*; let *Death* come when it will, 'tis always welcome. Is it so to us?

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His Heart is in Heaven : The only thing that troubles him on Earth is the great Distance he is at from his blessed Country : He prays therefore, and his repeated Prayer is, Thy Kingdom come : (Mat. 6.) He prays like David ; My God, as the Hart pants after Water, so my Soul pants after thee : When shall I appear before my God ! One thing I desire of thee, O Lord, that I may dwell in thy House, and behold thy Bounty. (Psal. 41.) He laments, he sighs, he wishes to be there. Is it so with us ? Are our Hearts bent on Heaven ? Do we languish after this blessed Company ?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to answer this Character of a Christian : In order thereto, disengage your Hearts from a sinful World, and fix them on Heaven ; by the Grace of God you may effect it : Ask it therefore in all Humility ; and remember that the Name of Christian, if duly comply'd with, will be a Lustre to your Glory ; but if abused, your severer Condemnation.

6th Day. On Self-Knowledge.

R E F L E C T I O N .

HUMILITY is the Ground of Virtue, and *the Knowledge of ourselves* the Foundation of Humility. We cannot know ourselves, but we must see our *Origin* ; that we were created out of Nothing, conceived in Sin, and came naked and weeping into the World : We cannot know ourselves, but we must see our *present*

present Condition ; that we have a depraved Heart, and do lie under a thousand Weaknesses and Imperfections : We cannot know ourselves, but must at the same Time own a total Dependance on the divine Goodness ; that we are unable of ourselves to have a Thought of Heaven ; and if we are visited with Chastisements from above, they are not a Shadow to what our Sins have deserved. Is not therefore the Knowledge of ourselves the Ground of Virtue ? Let me be well skill'd in the Affairs of the World ; let me know how to aggrandize myself, and enjoy the sweetest Pleasures the Earth affords ; let me conceive the highest Mysteries of Faith, and all the Secrets in Nature ; it will avail nothing if I am ignorant of my Heart. *I shall be like to him that builds without a Foundation, preparing a Ruin rather than an Edifice.* St. Bern.

We are all sick, our Souls are sick to Death ; and why don't we study the Cause of the Distemper, to apply the Remedy ? Why don't we watch the Motions of our Hearts, and observe from what Source our Passions flow ? How comes it our Inclinations are still untam'd ? And notwithstanding our best Resolutions, we are as subject as ever to sinful Failings ? It is for want of studying the Science of the Saints, the Knowledge of ourselves. Let us then pray with David, *My God, illuminate the Darkness of my Soul.* (Psal. 17.) Let us pray with St. Augustine, *O Lord, let me know myself and thee.*

Examine

Examine yourselves, and let not Pride, Self-Love, or Sloth, with all their Artifices, lead you away from the Knowledge of yourselves: It is a necessary Study, and a daily Meditation is the best Help to it. Take but that Care in reflecting on yourselves, which you naturally do in observing your Neighbour, and your Work is done.

7th Day. On the Promises made at Baptism.

REFLECTION.

WHAT are these Promises? I renounce Satan and all his Works; I renounce him and all his Pomp; I do renounce him. They are a most solemn and repeated Renunciation, made by every Christian at the Foot of the Altar, and in the Sight of Heaven and Earth: God and his Holy Angels are Witnesses of it. Have we not been perfidious to this sacred Vow? I fear our guilty Consciences will rise in Judgment against us.

The Name of perfidious, is, the most ignominious Reproach that can be fix'd on a Person; Nature itself abhors the Character: There is not that Man of Worth, but would willingly sacrifice Estate, Family, Life, and all that his dear to him, rather than lie under the infamous Character of a perfidious Wretch. If then it be so black a Crime betwixt Man and Man, what must it be between God and Man?

Man? Between a boundless Majesty, and a creeping Worm, and in a Matter of the highest Concern too? Let us therefore reflect, that by every mortal Sin we stand guilty of an unparallel'd *Perfidiousness*, in breaking the *solemn Promises* made at Baptism; and that we renounce God to serve the Devil. Blessed Lord preserve us from this base *Perfidiousness*; may our *Baptismal Renunciation* be ever before our Eyes, to the end we may not dare to violate those *sacred Vows* we made to thee.

At Baptism we were cloathed with a white Garment; the Minister of Christ gave it with these Words: *Receive this white Garment, which you shall carry unspotted before the Judgment-seat of God.* (Rit. Rom.) Have we kept it without Spot? Have we not defiled by Pride, Impurity, rash Judgment, or Detraction, this *Robe of Innocency*? Have we not stained it by violating the Commands of God, of his Church?

Examine yourselves, and dread a Violation of your *Baptismal Promises*; it is, you see, a perfidious Treachery, and of the highest Nature: If you are guilty of it, seek a Reconciliation by an *early Repentance*; propose to your Thoughts your future Judgment; and remember that the *white Garment* you received, the *sacred Vows* you made, the *Priest* that baptized you, your own *Consciences*, the *Angels* who were Witnesses of these solemn Doings, will demand Vengeance against you, for all Abuses offer'd to the *Grace of Baptism*.

8th Day.

8th Day. On the Affair of Salvation.

REFLECTION I.

GO D has created us without ourselves, but he will not save us unless we concur. St. August. Our Souls are our own; and it is our own Business to save them: A Person that has a Suit at Law, may, by means of an Advocate, carry his Cause: A Prince may become victorious by the Valour of his Generals; but it is not so in the Affair of Salvation. 'Tis true, we shall be arraigned before an Almighty Judge; but we must plead ourselves. Are we prepared for it? We have the World and Devils, mighty Enemies, to engage with; and we must fight our own Battles. Are we able to do it?

What should we think of the Man, who being very active in soliciting for his Friend, tho' in a Matter of a Trifle, carelessly at the same Time lets fall his own Cause, upon the Success whereof *Life* and *Fortune* entirely depends? And is it not surprizing, that this should be the general Case of Mankind? How many *solicitous* provide for this foolish World, to the Prejudice of their Souls! How many *eagerly* strive to flatter their Carcasses, to the Loss of their Souls! How many lose their Time in vain Amusements, when they should be working out their Salvation with *Fear* and *Trembling*! Alas! did we but take one quarter of that Pains the

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Farmer undergoes in cultivating his Land; the *Merchant* for the purchasing a little Dust; the *Courtier* to gain the good Will of his Prince; the *Gentleman* in order to support his Family; we should all be Saints.

Were a damn'd Soul permitted to return to Life, what would it not undergo to *save* itself? Would it grumble at Providence because afflicted? Or rather, would it not *re-signedly* rejoice in its Sufferings, and make them the Instruments of its future Glory? Would it think Prayer tedious, Penance unnecessary? Would it a second time follow the Suggestions of a corrupt World, and neglect its Eternity? No certainly.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your Concern to *save* your Souls: You were created for this End: It is your *unum Necesarium*; without which you are lost, and lost for ever.

9th Day. On our greatest Affair.

REFLECTION II.

THE Salvation of our Souls is our *greatest Affair*. The overthrowing an Enemy, the purchasing an Estate, the Management of a Kingdom, are Matters of Concern; but nothing if compared to the *Business of Salvation*. The best Things in the World die with us, but our Souls are immortal: They will most certainly be *eternally happy or miserable*

serable. If we lose our Souls, we lose God and all; all is lost, and without Hopes of Recovery. Ah! my God, to lose thee, is my greatest Unhappiness: To lose thee *for ever*, is a dismal Subject of deep Despair: To lose thee for a *base Pleasure*, is a shameful Folly.

What does it avail a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what Exchange shall a Man make for his Soul? (Mat. 16.) says our blessed Saviour. Let the World smile upon him; let him be mounted to the Pinnacle of Honour; let him enjoy what his Heart can possibly thirst after in this Life; it will avail him nothing, if he lose his Soul.

When our departing Hour shall come (and 'tis certain it will come, tho' how soon we know not) shall we be able to comfort ourselves with the Thoughts that we have been successful in the Affairs of the World? That we have vainly aggrandized ourselves, and made a good Provision for Wife and Children, while the *main Business of Eternity* has lain unregarded? No, we shall repent, and perhaps too late, our unhappy Neglect: We shall be sensible of the Waste of Time; of that precious Time given us for the *saving* our Souls: We shall be convinced the World is *Vanity and Affliction of Spirit*; (Eccles. 2.) and we shall bewail our Misfortune, that, on account of these Follies, we have forfeited our Happiness.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and let the Affair of Salvation be your greatest Concern. Place it daily before your Eyes ; husband well your Time ; and think it all little enough to purchase Heaven in. Remember you are marching between two Eternities ; choose that now, which you would choose at the Hour of Death : Spare nothing to spare your Souls. St. Hier.

10th Day. On our only Affair.

REFLECTION III.

THE Salvation of our Souls is our *only* Affair. It must be so, since it has been the *sole* Design of the *most blessed Trinity*. God the Father has created us to his own Likeness : He has given us a Will, Memory and Understanding ; that, by serving him, we may *save our Souls* : God the Son was made Man ; he lead a painful Life, and died upon a Cross : And why ? That redeeming us from Sin, we might every one be *saved*. God the Holy Ghost has called us to the *true Faith* ; he has *sanctified* us by his Graces, and afforded us fair Opportunities of doing Good ; and for this very end, to *work out our Salvation*. Thus hath the blessed Trinity every way concurred to save our Souls. *One thing is necessary*, says our dearest Saviour ; (Luke 10.) yes, the *saving our Souls* is absolutely necessary : All depends upon it.

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We shall one Day appear before the *Tribunal of Christ*, to give in at the Bar a full Account of our Lives. Will it serve our Turn to make this kind of Plea? Lord we have done great Things; we have gain'd the Esteem and Applause of Men; we have heap'd up Riches; we have follow'd our Inclinations; we have spent our Time in jovial Divertisements; we have been kind to our Neighbours; we have neglected nothing but the *Concern of Salvation*. Will this do? And yet, can the greater part of Mankind give in a better Account? No, they will not be able, till they change their Lives.

The Saints were wise; they esteemed their Salvation their *only Business*; and therefore they spent their Lives in preparing for *Eternity*: And can we think of going to Heaven without taking Pains for it? O merciful God, pardon our past Neglects: Our Lives, for the future, shall manifest a *Change of Hearts*: We will *save our Souls*; we are resolved upon it; but let thy Grace make our Resolutions fruitful.

Examine yourselves, and see whether the Affair of your Souls has been your *only Affair*; Remember you have but one *dear Soul*; and if you once lose it, 'tis lost for ever. Allow your *Souls* but half that Time which you throw away upon a wicked World, and you will be glorious Saints.

11th Day. On the Difficulty of Salvation.

REFLECTION IV.

THE saving our Souls is a *hard Task*. This Truth will evidently appear, if we reflect on the many and implacable Enemies we are unavoidably to engage with. How many *violent Passions* must be retrench'd! How many *inveterate Habits* are to be overcome, before we can enter Heaven! How strict a Watch are we to keep over our *Senses*! How many dangerous Occasions to be shun'd, in order to Salvation! Does not this require indefatigable Labour? Great Grace?

The *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil* must be subdued. The *World* strives all it can to *allure* us by Promises, to gain us by Threats, to *seduce* us by its Maxims, to *corrupt* us by Example: The *Flesh*, our domestic Enemy, ceases not to attack us with its sinful Charms: The *Devil*, that watchful and cruel Enemy of Mankind, exerts his utmost Vigour to involve us in his Misery. How shall we overcome them? Are these Enemies not to be regarded? Can we think it an easy Matter to conquer them? May they be worsted by the best *natural Strength*? No; and yet they must be subdued, or we lose our Souls. Salvation is certainly a *hard Task*.

No wonder our Saviour tells us Heaven is to be taken by *main Force*: (Mat. 11.) No wonder the Gate that leads to Bliss is narrow, and

and few find it : (Mat. 7.) No wonder the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a precious Stone : (Mat. 13.) It is precious indeed ; we must relinquish every thing in order to purchase it ; we must strive even to Blood before we can obtain it.

Examine yourselves, and be surprized at the Folly of the greatest part of Mankind, who vainly imagine they shall go to Heaven without taking Pains for it : Ye can do nothing of yourselves ; but to the Grace of God all Things are possible. (Mat. 19.) Ask it then in your fervent and humble Prayers, and you will assuredly obtain it.

12th Day. On the Possibility of being Saved.

REFLECTION V.

IT is an unquestionable Point of Faith, That through the Grace of God we may all be saved. Christ calls upon us ; Come unto me all you that labour and are burden'd, and I will refresh you. (Mat. 11.) Come you Blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World. (Mat. 25.) Blessed are the Poor of Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mat. 5.) Would Christ have thus called us ? Would he have invited us to his glorious Kingdom, were we not in a way of being saved ? Would he have inform'd us, that the Poor, the Meek, the Chaste and Humble enter Heaven, were there no Heaven for them ? No, he had never said it ; he had

never redeemed us ; God had never created us, were we not capable of Salvation.

It is Blasphemy to charge God with the least *Injustice* ; and yet it must be a very great one, to lay an Injunction on us of saving our Souls, under pain of Damnation, and leave us destitute of all *Means* to effect it. 'Tis true, the Way of Salvation is *difficult* : 'Tis true, we have the Devil, and other implacable Enemies, Confederate against us : But what then ? Is not God above the Devil ? And tho' we cannot defeat him by our own *Strength*, are we not succour'd with the *Divine Grace* in order to do it ? Does it not support us under the sharpest Conflicts ? Is it not our Comfort in the most threatening Dangers ?

Let us not be dejected at the Number of our Enemies ; there are Legions of *Angels* to stand by us ; the *Blessed Virgin* and the *Saints* will come in to our Assistance : We have the dreadful Torments of the *Damn'd* set before us, to quicken our Slothfulness ; we have the Promise of everlasting *Bliss*, to encourage us in the Combat. What can we desire more ?

Examine yourselves, and resolve to do your Utmost for the gaining your Souls. It is in *your Power* to be saved ; therefore, if you are lost, it will be through your own *Fault*. Reflect on the *Opportunities* you have had above Thousands, of purchasing Happiness ; and remember, *the more you have received, the more you have to answer for.* (Luke 12.)

13th Day,

13th Day. On the Means of Salvation.

REFLECTION VI.

IT is no small Grace to be born of Christian Parents, while the greater Part of the World lies buried in Infidelity: It is no small Grace to be educated in the Bosom of the true Catholic Church, whilst our unhappy Country is led away with Error: It is no slender Mercy to have been instructed in our Youth, and to have had daily Opportunities of saving our Souls. How many at this time are lamenting in Hell's Flames! who, had they been favour'd with half those Helps we continually receive, would probably have been Saints in Heaven.

What mean the *Sacraments*? Are they not given us as *Helps* to Salvation? Are they not instituted for the *bathing* our Souls in Christ's *healing Blood*? It was easy for the *Apostles* to be Saints, when they had their Lord with them; and shall it be difficult to us, who have him in our Churches, on our Altars, in the Eucharist, offering himself to be our *Food*?

What means the *Mass*, that adorable *Sacrifice*? Why, 'tis offer'd to Heaven for the Expiation of our Sins. 'Tis truly adorable, when a God is the *Priest*, and a God the *Victim*. How many comfortable *Exhortations* do we hear! How many good *Books* are put into our Hands, to wean our Affections

from a flattering *World*, and to fix them on a more desirable *Good*! How soon were we taught to pray, and to pray for Heaven! How many Examples have we to excite us to Virtue! We have the rare Example of a crucify'd God; we have the encouraging Lives of Saints and Martyrs. Are not these great *Helps*? Nay, every respectful State of Life; every Sicknes, or unfortunate Calamity; our very Passions, if rightly managed, serve as so many *Helps* to Salvation.

Examine yourselves, and see what Use you have made of these distinguishing Favours: Repent of past Neglects; and look upon it as a singular Mercy that you are not cast off in Vengeance of them. Who is the better for your Happiness besides yourselves? God is not.

14th Day. On the small Number of the Elect.

REFLECTION I.

THE Number of the Elect is *small*. Of the whole *World*, only *Noah* and his Family were preserved from the Deluge; (Gen. 7.) out of five populous Cities, *Sodom*, *Gomorah*, and the neighbouring ones, only four Persons were timely delivered from a fiery Destruction; (Gen. 19.) of many hundred thousand Souls that came out of *Egypt*, only two, *Joshua* and *Caleb*, enter'd *Canaan*, the *Land of Promise*. (Num. 26.) All which Instances

Instances are an *Emblem* of this Truth, *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Mat. 22.)

No wonder then, that the *Elect* are compar'd to a few *Olives* left upon the *Trees* after a diligent gathering: (Isai. 24.) No wonder they are liken'd to the small *Number* of *Grapes* remaining upon the *Vines* after a well-glean'd *Vintage*: (Ibid.) No wonder they are ballanc'd with the few *Ears of Corn* which have escap'd the searching Hand of the careful *Reaper*: No wonder the *Gate is strait* and the *Way narrow* that leads to *Life*, and but few find it. (Mat. 7.) Are we not awaken'd at these amazing *Truths*? Does not the small *Number* of the *Elect* rouse our dull Thoughts, and make them intent on the Business of *Salvation*?

Were we assured that *one Man*, and but *one* out of ten thousand present, was to be dam'd, we should certainly tremble for fear it might prove our Lot. The *Apostles* were in a frightful way, when their dear Lord told them there was a *Devil* amongst them; nor could they rest till they were righty inform'd that *Judas* was the *Wretch*. (Mat. 26.) Perhaps of ten thousand there will hardly *one* be saved; and are we unconcern'd? The News of a Ship lost, tho' there be Hundreds at Sea, makes every engaged Merchant apprehensive of his Effects; and are we not solicitous for *ourselves*? Can we pass by unregardedly the Concerns of Heaven, when

it evidently appears, that there are but few who arrive at that blissful Port?

Examine yourselves, and be not so presumptuous as the Generality of the World is. By a good Life make your *Election* sure. (2 Pet. 3.) You are to be of the Number of the Few, if you would be of the Saved. St. Jerome.

15th Day. *On the very small Number of the Elect.*

REFLECTION. II.

THE Number of the Elect is *very small*. At this present time *Africa*, two-thirds of *Asia*, the biggest Part of *America*, lie groveling in the dark Shades of Infidelity: In *Europe* only is Christianity generally planted; and yet, in this least Part of the World, how many are seduced by the Spirit of *Heresy*! Among the *true believing Christians* how few live up to the Principals of their Faith, to the Rules of the Gospel? Alas! daily Experience convinces us there is but a *little good Corn*; or that the Number of the Chosen is *very small*.

The *Christian* must follow the Example of *Jesus Christ*; he must conform his Life to the Life of his blessed Master; he must carry his Cross, that is, renounce himself, mortify his Senses, subject his Passions and sensual Inclinations to the Will of God, or there is no Heaven for him. Is this his Carriage?

Are

Are there many to be found who practise these Lessons? Or rather, is not their Number very small.

'Tis true, there are some who live regularly in the World; who have merited the Repute of honest Men, and in all Appearance are good Christians; but will *none* of these have their Portion with the Reprobate? There are others who have shut themselves up in close *Monasteries*, there to spend their Lives in Virtue and Penance; and will they all be saved? Alas! what will become of us? O dearest Saviour, who hast redeemed me with thy *Blood*, suffer it not to be shed in vain: If others will run in Crowds to Hell, I will strive nevertheless to *save my Soul*; I am resolved to do it: I crave thy Grace to strengthen my *Resolutions*.

Examine yourselves, and let not the too general Practice of the World be your Rule: If they will unhappily ruin themselves, don't you do so for Company. Meditate frequently on this important Truth, *Many are called, but few chosen*; (Mat. 20.) Imitate the Saints, who, by an *humble Fear*, procured their Salvation.

16th Day. *On Predestination.*

R E F L E C T I O N.

It is very dangerous, and a Thing unprofitable, to enter upon the *Secret of Predestination*: It is dangerous, because naturally apt

apt to cast us into Despair, or a wicked Life; It is unprofitable, because not our Business to dive into the impenetrable Mysteries of God, or to think of fathoming the Decrees of Heaven. O God, we adore, in the profoundest Silence, thy *unsearchable Judgments!*

God from Eternity knows our Lots; What will they be? Why do we ask these Questions? Is it not enough that his Goodness *loves* us? Has he not shewn us visible Marks of his Love? Is not the *wonderful Work* of our Redemption a full Demonstration of an *excessive Love*? Has he not commanded us to trust in him? Has he not called and invited, and pressed us to his Service? Why then are we concerned at what our Lot will be? Why do we ask these unprofitable Questions?

What need I labour for Heaven, when it is already known whether I am of the *lost* or *saved*? Deluding Artifice! Unhappy Stratagem of the Devil, laid for the Destruction of innumerable Souls! It is decreed I must die. When the *Hour* is come, the World cannot save me; am I not therefore to take *care* of my Health? May I reasonably throw off the *Advice* of the *Physician* under the Malignity of a Distemper? Is not the *Prince* to engage his Enemies, the *Lawyer* to plead his Cause, because the Matter is determined in the Appointments of Heaven? May the *Farmer* sit still? May he let his Land lie fallow, and yet reasonably expect a plentiful Harvest, because one thing or other is already designed by an

unerring

merring Providence? No certainly; and yet
the Case is the same in the Business of *Salvation*.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to shun
his diabolical Illusion: If God has decreed
our Happiness, remember that he has decreed
the *Means* too, which is to *labour* for it. You
must strive to enter in at the *narrow Gate*; it
is thro' many *Tribulations* you are to enter into
Heaven. (A&ts 14.)

7th Day. *On the Vanity of the World.*

REFLECTION I.

NEVER was there Man so bless'd with
Plenty, as was the great King *Solomon*:
(2 Chron. 9.) Peace, Prosperity, all the Glo-
ry of the World smiled upon him: His Praises
reached the farthest Corners of the Earth:
The Queen of *Sheba* was struck with Admi-
ration at his Wisdom; and yet, what were
his own Thoughts of all he possessed? *Vanity*
of Vanities, and all is Vanity. *I saw all the*
things that are under the Sun, and behold they
are Vanity and Affliction of Spirit. (Eccles. 1.)
I said I will go and abound with Delights, and
this was Vanity: I denied myself no Pleasure
that my Heart could desire, and yet all was Va-
nity and Affliction of Mind. (Eccles. 2.) This
great Prince was the *wisest* of Men; and what
he avers, he found by his own Experience;
and shall we be in Love with this *vain* World?
Shall we love it to the Prejudice of our Souls?

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The World is *vain*, because nothing in it can satisfy our Hearts. Let us consult them; have we found true Content amidst the Pleasures of this Life? Or were they not accompanied with some Uneasiness? Were not the Honours to which we have been promoted imbitter'd with Envy, or racking Ambition? In a full Possession of Plenty, were not our Thoughts upon something more? Were we contented? No; tho' Honours, Riches, Pleasures, be our constant Attendants; tho' we want nothing for the favouring Humour, or gratifying Inclination; we cannot be truly satisfy'd. Is not therefore the World most *vain*?

Tell me; What is it the World recommends, which is not made up of *Vanity*? *Honours* are *vain*, because transitory and unconstant. Besides, where is the *Glory* in being esteemed, or praised by the Breath of *Sinner*? *Riches* are *vain*, because perishable; and themselves too apt to disturb our Thoughts, and damn our Souls: *Pleasures* are *vain*, cause carnal, sinful, and of little Durance: *Beauty* is a *Vanity*, because so very fading and inconsiderable in itself. Go, *vain World*, thou hast nothing to do with a *Christian Heart*; it is fixed on better Objects, the Joys of *Heaven*.

Examine yourselves, and set not your Affections on a *vain World*. In all Occurrences of Life, remember the End for which you were created; it is to serve *God*, and not the *World*. If you desire solid *Riches*, they are

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to be found in *God*: If you seek after *Pleas*
ures, they are to be found in *Him*: Only
God can satisfy your *Hearts*, who is the charming
Beauty of Angels.

8th Day. *On the Wickedness of the World.*

REFLECTION II.

THE whole *World* is seated in *Wickedness*.
(*I John 5.*) To engage in its *Company* is always dangerous; its *Maxims* are detestable; its *Customs* the most pernicious: It is overrun with *Pride*, *Luxury*, and *Ambition*; *Detraction*, *Murder*, *Perjury*, and *Over-reaching* know no Bounds: It encourages *Scandals*, in defiance to the *Woes* pronounced against them: It is an *Enemy* to *God*, and to the *Good* of *Souls*. How much *Vice* and horrible *Profaneness* generally reigns in the Christian *World*! And can we set our *Affections* on it? O *Jesus*, deliver us from this murdering *Evil*!

If the *Men of the World* chance to speak of *God*, is it not to *curse* and *blaspheme* his *Name*? If they hear his *Word*, is it not too often to *ridicule* it? If they enter into his *Churches*, is it not to *profane* them by their crying *Sacrileges* and *lewd Behaviour*? If they think of the *Poor*, is it not to *oppress* them? Alas! they are unacquainted with a *mortify'd Spirit*: The *Gospel*, with them, is become a *Folly*; *Innocence*, *Ill-nature*; *Humility*, *beneath a Man*; *Patience*,

Patience, a Thing fitter to be preached to the Winds than Men. And what Pity is it that even the better Sort should be so puffed up with worldly *Pride*, corrupted by its *Vanity*, and led away with its *Pleasures*!

Christians, what are you doing? Can you own this sacred *Name*, and still take Part with a depraved *World*, in Opposition to your *God*? Tell me; Who created you? Was it *God*, or the *World*? Who redeemed your Souls from the Gates of *Hell*? Who preserves you each Moment from being involved in that unhappy *Gulf*? Is it *God*, or the *World*? To whom did you make your first *Vows* of Fealty in the *Holy Sacrament of Baptism*? Were they to *God*, or the *World*? To *God* they were; and why don't you serve *Him*?

Examine yourselves, and conceive a Detestation of this criminal *World*: Hate it, because it is an Enemy to *God*, and to your *Souls*: Hate it, because it has ruin'd an infinite Number of *Souls*, for whom *Christ* died. Pray for poor *Worldlings*, who are blindly running on to their eternal Perdition.

19th Day. On the Deceitfulness of the World.

REFLECTION III.

WHAT are become of the many healthful and strong Men we have formerly been acquainted with? They were cut off in the

the Flower of their Age; tho' the World promised them a long Life. Where are those great ones, who had a noble Train of Attendants following at their Heels? They are fallen into Disgrace, or they are reduced to Beggary; tho' the World flattered them with a happy Life. Is there any thing more *deceitful*? Where are those gallant Princes, who laboured, by their brave Achievements, to transmit their Names to After-ages? They are almost all forgotten; tho' the World promised to erect *Monuments* to their glorious Memory. How little is an *Alexander* or a *Cæsar* thought of! True it is, *Their Memory has perish'd with the Sound thereof*: (*Psal. 9.*) *Their Remembrance is as Ashes trodden under Foot.* (*Job 13.*)

Can we be in Love with this *perfidious* World? Has it not above four hundred of *Achab's* false Prophets, to flatter and deceive us? (*1 Kings 22.*) In every Corner, it has a treacherous *Joab* to embrace with one Arm, and stab with the other: (*2 Kings 20.*) It wants not a *Judas*, to give the *betraying* Kiss of Peace. (*Luke 22.*) O miserable and *deceitful* World! Who can love thee? Who cannot but hate thee? Thy Grief is *true*; thy Pleasures are *false*.

Christians, let us *despise* it; let us abhor its too common Neglect of God, and of the Concerns of a Soul: Let us dread its repeated Profanation of the Sacraments, and holy Things; let us despise its *Pride*, and *vain Ambition*;

Ambition; let us despise its base and carnal *Pleasures*; let us despise its corrupt *Customs*, and exorbitant *Love of Riches*; they all lead to *Ruin*: By this *Contempt* of a *false World*, we shall possess *God*; the endless *Comfort* of Men and Angels.

Examine yourselves, and let your Lives demonstrate a *Contempt* of the *World*: Say not it is *vain*, *wicked* and *deceitful*, as many do; who, at the same time, *freely careſſ it* in their Actions: This will not serve, unless it be to your greater *Condemnation*, in *manifestly acting* against your *Consciences*. Ah! How great a *Contempt* had *Christ*, and his *Saints*, of this *cheating World*!

20 Day. On a Separation from the World.

REFLECTION IV.

I Am not of this *World*. (John 8.) I pray not for the *World*. (John 17.) Woe be to the *World*. (Mat. 18.) You are of this *World*. I said therefore you shall die in your *Sins*. (John 8.) These are the Words of *Jesus Christ*; wherein again and again he condemns the Proceedings of this wicked *World*. Is not this enough for any Christian to separate from it? It is an *Enemy* to *Christ*; and can we, his Followers, cherish it within our Breasts?

What *Christ* has said in regard to the *World*, he has confirm'd by *Example*: He would be

born

born in a *neglected Stable*, and at dark *Night*: For thirty Years he led a *private Life* under a Carpenter's Roof; when he appeared in Public, he mostly frequented the Company of the *poor* and *inferior Jews*: He chose for his Disciples persons *mean* and *ignorant*: And he died the Death of the most Criminal Malefactors. Does not *Christ* here teach us by his Example also a *Separation* from the World? Was he not wholly *estranged* from its Pleasures, and its indulging Ease? Let us therefore follow him. We are *Christians*; and on this Title, every-way obliged to copy out his Example in our own Lives: It should be natural for *Members* to follow their *Head*.

How many glorious *Saints* have voluntarily left the World in *Imitation* of their Lord! How many *Confessors* have shut themselves up in close Monasteries, choosing rather to undergo the greatest bodily Rigours, than be led away by a *vain World*! How many *Martyrs*, and amongst them tender *Virgins* nobly born, have relinquished Riches, Honours, Friends and Pleasures! and with an *Agatha*, have sacrificed themselves to the worst of Torments, rather than side with a *profane World* in Opposition to God! Do we imitate these *Saints*? I fear we cannot say it. But we are resolved to renounce the World in *Heart* and *Affections* at least? We must do so, if we hope one Day to share in the Glory of the *Saints*.

Examine yourselves, and conclude with these *Thoughts*: What, shall I damn my Soul

for the *short* Pleasures of this Life? Ah! if I *lose* my Soul, what will it avail me to gain the World! What *true* Repose can the World afford me! I see it to be *vain*, *wicked*, and *deceitful*. O my God, take me out of the World, or take the World from me; remove it from my *Heart*; let me *die to it*, that I may *live to thee*.

**21st Day. On a Heart divided betwixt
God and the World.**

REFLECTION V.

THREE is no dividing the *Heart* betwixt *God* and the *World*: It will appear impossible, if we examine their Maxims: *Christ* declares the *Poor* happy; the *World* regards them as the *vilest* Creatures: *Christ* commends the *Meek* and *Humble*; (Mat. 5.) the *World* scorns them: *Christ* condemns the *inordinate Love* of *Riches*; the *World* pursues them: *Christ* preaches *Penance*; Mat. 4:) the *World Pleasure*: *Christ* teaches the *Pardon* of *Injuries*; and the *World Revenge*. Is *Light* and *Darkness* more opposite? *No Man can serve two Masters.* (Mat. 6.)

Christian, why wilt thou thus unjustly divide thy *Heart*? It is thy God created thee; thy God redeemed thee with his Blood; thy God preserves thee in all *Dangers*; whatever *Blessings* thou receivest, they are derived from him; and wilt thou not make him a *suitable Return*?

Return? He calls upon thee, Son, give me thy Heart: (Prov. 23.) And is it too much, to give it to him entirely? Is thy Heart too much for the immense Lord of Heaven and Earth, who have given his *whole self* to thee? Do the Angels think so? Do the *Blessed Saints*? *Woe be to the double Heart!* (Eccl. 2.) He is worse than an Idolater; because he *knows his God*, and yet sets up *worldly Idols* to confront him: What can he expect, but the severest Judgment; who, *Philistijm-like*, sets the *Ark* and *Dagon* upon the same Altar? (Kings 5.)

Let us sound our *Hearts*: Are they set upon the *World*? Are they bent upon *Vanities*? Are they in Pursuit of *Riches*, or the *vain Applause* of Men? Are they led away by *criminal Diversions*? If so, they belong not to God: He is a *jealous God*, and can bear no *Rival*; he is a *loving God*, and therefore will he be the very *Center* of our *Hearts*: We must give him *all*, or give him *none*. O Lord, my *Heart* is in thy Hands; take it as thou gavest it: If any thing could hinder me from offering it to Thee; it would be the *Meanness* of the Offering.

Examine yourselves, and see if your *Hearts* are fixed on *God*: Let no *Affections* to *Creatures* take Place of him: Pretend not to serve *God* and the *World*; it is a thing impossible. The great Commandment of the Law is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart.* (Mat. 22.) Religiously observe it.

22d Day. On *Worldly Sollicitude.*

REFLECTION VI.

TO be *unmindful* of God, and his terrible Judgments; to think little on the Grievousness of Sin, and its sad Effects; to have no *Regard* to the approaching Hour of Death, or an endless Eternity; to find no *Relish* in heavenly Things; are great *Misfortunes*: And are they not the Effects of *worldly Sollicitude*? How seldom does the *solicitous* Person think of another Life! How *incapable* is he of preparing for it? O Lord, deliver me from this *unhappy Sollicitude*: I see it violently clogs my Soul; that I can neither pray, nor read, nor think of its Concerns: O let me not be so *unjust*, and strangely *ungrateful*, as to fix my Heart on any thing but *Thee*: Let me not act the *Heathen*, in placing my Confidence in the *Things of this World*: Ah! Let me not prove such an *Enemy* to myself.

God has given us Life: And can we then imagine, he has not a tender *Care* for our Preservation? He has delivered over his eternal Son for the *Redemption* of our Souls; and can he *overlook* our corporal Wants? The most raging Monsters forget not their young ones, and will our heavenly Father be *unmindful* of us? He has sweetly adorned the Lillies of the Valley; and will not his Providence afford us *Raiment*? Why then are we *solicitous*? Set first the Kingdom of God, and his Justice, and all these Things shall be given to you. (Mat. 6.)

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There is a great deal of *Bitterness* in all worldly *Sollicitude*, but no *Pleasure*. Where is the Pleasure in being racked Day and Night with *restless Cares*? Where is the Comfort, in enjoying *unconstant* and *perishable Creatures*? Where is the Satisfaction, in being unmercifully torn from our beloved *Treasures*? May we not unexpectedly hear that fearful Call, *Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul shall be required of thee?* (Luke 12.)

Examine yourselves, and be sure to follow the seasonable Advice of your dear Master, *be not sollicitous.* (Mat. 6.) Be not *sollicitous* for the *Vanities* of the *World*; it is a *criminal Sollicitude*: Be not *too sollicitous* for the *Necessities* of *Life*. In all Occurrences entirely depend on the divine Goodness. If you must be *sollicitous*, let it be for *heavenly Things*; which only can serve to make you happy.

23 Day. *On Providence.*

REFLECTION VII.

AS the Creation of the World is the Work of *Providence*, so there is nothing in it, but what is influenced by the *Almighty Mover*: It reaches from the Throne to the Cottage; it regards the most contemptible and vilest Infests: The Sun, Moon, and Stars are guided by it; each Breath we draw, Understanding, Grace, whatever concerns Soul or Body, this World or the next, is the *Effect* of *Providence.*

dence. Why then are we so *solicitous* for the Things of this World, when we have an *all-helping Providence* to rely upon? The Patriarch Joseph in all his Sufferings was assisted by *Providence*; even into the Pit it descended with him. (Wisd. 10.) The *Israelites*, in the Wilderness, found the Effects of *Providence*; it showered down upon them *Manna* from Heaven. (Exod. 16.) Five Barley Loaves, and two Fishes, were multiply'd by *Providence*; enough to support five thousand People. (Mat. 14.) Are not these *encouraging Instances* to rely on *Providence*?

How many Ways has the divine *Providence* provided for our Souls! It thought of us long before we had a Being: It has enlightened us with the *true Faith*, tho' born and bred amidst a People seduced by *Heresy*: It has afforded us *Prayer*, the *Sacraments*, *Exhortations*, pious Examples, and daily Opportunities of *doing Good*. How many Souls has it reclaimed from the Depth of *Sin*? How many has it brought to a *right Understanding* of themselves, by temporal Calamities? How often have our own *Hearts* been suddenly touched with secret *Inspirations*, when we least deserved them! O the *Providence* of God! which strongly moves, and sweetly disposes of all Beings. (Wisd. 8.)

Does the World frown upon us? Let us rely on *Providence*: Are we molested with Temptations? Let us trust in *Providence*: Are we dash'd at the Sight of our Sins? Let

us confide in *Providence*: Are we persecuted in Estate, good Name, or Religion? Let us patiently wait the *holy Will of Providence*.

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain an humble *Resignation* under all the Appointments of Heaven. Throw yourselves into the kind Arms of *Providence*; having these Words stampt upon your Hearts, and on your Lips: *O Lord, thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.* (Mat. 6.)

24th Day. On bad Company.

REFLECTION I.

WICKED Company is a most pernicious Evil; it is a *Rock*, against which Millions of Souls have been irreparably wreck'd. *Ignorance, Shame, and Fear*, are the Bulwarks of *Innocence*; but are all subverted by evil *Company*. Alas! how many are engaged in a Habit of mortal Sin; which they had never known, had they not been instructed by *wicked Company*! How many have a natural Abhorrence of the *blackest Crimes*, and would still retain the same, had they not been recommended by *wicked Company*? How many have an inbred Shame of Vice, which would have continued with them, were it not destroyed by *wicked Company*? And in such Manner, that they have oftentimes been ashamed, not of *Vice*, but of appearing *innocent*.

It was the once unhappy Case of the great St. Augustine: Hear what he says; *I went head-long into Vice, and with such Blindness, that I was ashamed to be less wicked than those of my Age; especially when I heard them glory in their Sins: When I could not equal the most Impious of my Companions, I feign'd Sins; lest my Innocence should render me the more contemptible.* (L. 2. Conf. c. 3.) Good God deliver us from this damning Evil: May our Lives be *inoffensive* to every-body: May we never be led away by *sinful Company*.

We must *fly from the midst of Babylon*, (Jerem. 5.) To carry Fire in our Bosoms, and hinder it from Burning; to live in the Heat of a contagious Distemper, and not be infected with it, is a thing impossible. *Bad Company* is a ravaging Pestilence: Let us pretend what we will, if we *fly it not*, it will certainly *infect us*.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to avoid all *wicked Company*: Fly the Company of those who *sollicit* you to Sin, or entertain you with *immoderate or disedifying Discourse*: Shun the Company of those who are of an *undi/ciplinit* Life: Make Choice of such as are *regular and virtuous*: The Welfare of your Souls depends upon it.

25th Day. On Pious Conversation.

REFLECTION II.

REVEAL not your Hearts to every-body; but with the Wise, and Fearing God, treat your Affairs. (*Imit. Chr. L. I. C. 8.*) Example has, at all times, a commanding Influence over the Soul; but never that Effect, as when strengthened by *Conversation*. *Pious Conversation* is the *Nursery* of Virtue: Here we conceive a Detestation of *Sin*: Here we learn to shake off *Ignorance*, and all heavy *Slothfulness*, in the way of Devotion: Here *Christian Virtues* are implanted in our Hearts, and our Affections weaned from a distracting World: Let us embrace it.

As *Christians*, we are supposed to be a leading Light of the World: Our good Works are to *shine* before Men: (*Mat. 5.*) And can we give greater Testimony of these Duties, than by frequenting the *Company of pious Persons*? Will not the World conclude us to be *good*, when it sees we make no other Choice, than that of the *Virtuous*? When it finds us conversing with the *Humble*, and *Chaste*; with the *Meek*, and *Patient*; with the *Sober*, and *Religious*? When it finds us in Love with the Company of those, who have their Thoughts in Heaven, and the Fear of God before their Eyes?

O God, I know my Weakness: I see Nature is so very corrupt, that it strongly leads

leads me to embrace that *Company*, which favours its Inclinations, tho' to the Prejudice of my Soul. O give me thy Grace, to the end my *Conversation* may be with the *Just*: That with them I may ever *think*, and *speak* of thee. That on Earth I may begin that happy *Entertainment*, which shall never end.

Examine yourselves, and take Care you engage in no other *Company*, but that of the *Good*. In all *Conversation*, let a modest Behaviour accompany your Words: Imprint in your Minds the good *Example* of the *Virtuous*; and strive to imitate them by a blessed Emulation.

26 Day. On Discourse.

R E F L E C T I O N .

A Person must be *perfect*, before he can think of not exceeding in Discourse. It was the Saying of a great Man, That as often as he engag'd in Company, tho' *innocent*, he ever return'd less a *Man*. Have we not Reason to believe it, when the Generality of *Discourse* runs full of Excess, and the most unblemish'd Conversation is accompany'd with Variety of *unprofitable Words*?

Let us lay our Hands upon our Hearts: Can we safely say, that we have not gone too far by *uncharitable Censures*, *rash Expressions*, *unreasonable Passion*? Have we not betray'd a *corrupt Heart* by a *Liberty* of *Speech*?

Speech? And been ashamed, in our recollect'd Thoughts, of what we have too forwardly uttered in *Discourse*? I fear we have. Let us therefore redress past Failings; and remember, that no Man gives greater Proof of the *Subjection* of his Passions, than he who duly commands his Tongue.

Alas! how sad a thing must it be, to profane that Tongue by lewd *Discourse*, which has been *sanctified* with the Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament! How deplorable, to make that Tongue the Source of *Oaths* and *Blasphemies*, which has been created for no other end than to *magnify* its Maker! How grievous an Abuse, to employ that Member in the Destruction of its Neighbour, which was given as a Means to help him towards Heaven! *Set, O Lord, a Guard before my Mouth, and a Door of Discretion to my Lips: May my Heart never utter any Words of Malice.* (Psal. 140.)

Examine yourselves, and if the Method of your *Discourse* be to blacken your Neighbour, to rip up his Imperfections, or to stamp Vice upon his Heart, resolve to break it off; it is a wicked Method: If your *Discourse* must relish of Vanity, or Self-Commendation; if it cannot be without giving Offence to God, be silent then; and remember, that for every idle Word, you are to render an Account at the Day of Judgment. (Mat. 12.)

27th Day. On Temptation.

REFLECTION I.

SON, prepare thy Soul for Temptation. (Eccl. 2.) We are not Angels, but Men; we must be tempted, or we forfeit our Crown. All the Saints, who are gone before us, were tempted; the Saint of Saints, Christ Jesus, was not exempt. *Man's Life is a Warfare upon Earth:* (Job 7.) We must fight with the *World*, and whatever it suggests; we must fight against the *Flesh*, and all Efforts of *Concupisence*; we must overthrow the *Devil*, tho' he be upon the Watch Day and Night to damn our Souls. *Help us, O Lord, or we Perish!* (Mat. 8.) We carry about us our greatest Enemy; fight therefore in us, and with us, and against us, or we are lost for ever.

Temptation is oftentimes an Effect of Mercy. God permits it, as Fire, to *purify* our Souls: He permits it to *humble* us; that, thereby perceiving our Insufficiency, we may own a necessary Dependance on him: He suffers us to be tempted, to try our *Patience*, to *improve* us in Virtue, and that we may merit an Eternal Crown of Glory. Are not these Favours? They are: Why then are we so discouraged at the sight of Temptation?

No; we will resolutely bear up: We will trust in Providence, who will not suffer us to be tempted above our Strength. (Cor. 10.)

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Let the *Devil* beset us with his hellish Forces ; let the *World* allure us with its charming Baits ; let the *lascivious* Stings of Concupiscence annoy us ; let us be tempted with a *Paul*, or a *Jerome* in the Wilderness ; what need we fear, when *God stands by us*? Grant us, O Lord, thy *supporting Grace*, without which we shall certainly fall.

Examine yourselves, and, like *valiant Soldiers*, fight the *Battles of your Lord*. If it be possible, crush the Enemy at his *first Attempt* : Divert your Thoughts to your *Crucified Jesus* ; kiss the Foot of the Cross with St. *Mary Magdalen* : Who can Sin, when he sees the Blood of Christ trickling down before him ? Cry aloud, *Lead us not, O Lord, into Temptation.* (Mat. 6.)

28th Day. On Resisting Temptation.

REFLECTION II.

A RE we tempted? Let us *fly*: It is no Cowardice to run away upon these Occasions ; but an evident Test of the bravest Courage. The Patriarch *Joseph* was truly Brave, because he had the Courage to *run away*. (Gen. 39.) Are we tempted? Let us pray: *Pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.* (Luke 22.) It is our Saviour's Advice : All Succour must come from God ; and 'tis to be obtain'd by *Prayer*. Are we tempted? If *Prayer* will not do, let us *fight*: St. *Paul* pray'd

pray'd and pray'd again, but his *Request* was not granted ; it was necessary that he should fight for his *Crown of Glory*. (2 Cor. 12.) Have we fought like *Christians*? We can have no Reason to fear, when God stands by to encourage us ; when he holds a *Crown* over our *Heads* to reward our *Conquests*.

Let these be our *Weapons*. What ! shall I by *Sin* lose the *Grace of God*, and make myself the *Object* of his just *Indignation*? Shall I damn myself *Eternally* for the wretched Pleasure of a wicked Thought ? Of an unchaste Desire ? What ! shall I, poor *Worm*, base *rebel* against a merciful *God*? Shall I barbarously trample on the *Blood of Jesus*, which he hath so freely spilt for my *Salvation*? No ; let the malicious *Enemy of Mankind* attack me on all Sides ; I will rather die, than yield to his *Suggestions*.

We must also strive against *small Temptations*. Every Victory over these petty Enemies will be an additional *Lustre* to our *Crowns* in *Heaven*. We must vigorously defend ourselves against *small Assaults*, if we mean to be *Conquerors* in greater Trials. It may be as great *Conquest* to overthrow these little, as the most raging Enemies ; because they are far more numerous.

Examine yourselves, and, for your dear *Soul's Sake*, be careful in opposing all *Temptations*, great and small. In troublesome ones, ask the *Advice* of your *spiritual Director* : By frequent *Examination* take a particular Review

view of the State of your Souls : Shun all Occasions of Sin. In Time of Temptation, apply yourselves to some virtuous Practice ; that the Devil, perceiving himself vanquish'd by his own Arms, may never attempt to insult you more.

29th Day. *On Time.*

REFLECTION I.

TIME is precious, because purchased by the Blood of Christ ; Time is precious, because 'tis given us to work out our Salvation in : In each Moment of Time we may merit Heaven. As many Moments therefore as we lose, they are so many lost Eternities. O unhappy Loss ! Can we be so senseless as to lose this dear Time ? Can we spend it in vain Diversions ? In slothful Idleness ? In Sin ? In drawing on our Heads the Wrath of God ? In ruining ourselves ? Alas ! we shall never know the true Value of Time, till we enter upon Eternity.

Time is short. What is past, is nothing : It is no more than a Dream ; or as if it had never been. Time to come, is not our own ; we cannot promise ourselves a Moment of it : Only the present Time is at our Command, and how quickly does it slide away ! The shooting of a Star, a Ship under Sail, the Rapidness of a Torrent, or a Bird on the Wing, is not so swift as are the Wings of Time.

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The present Time is but a *Moment*; on this *Moment* depends an *Eternity*; and shall we lose it? What would not the Souls in Hell give for this *Moment*?

Time is *irrevocable*; it cannot be recall'd. The *Moment*, wherein we read this Line, is just passing, *never, never* to return. What shall we do, who have mispent so much? We must *redeem* it by *Repentance*: God prolongs our Lives in order to it; he gives us *Time* to appease his Anger, and make Satisfaction to his offended Justice: He tells us, *Now is the acceptable Time*; (Cor. 6.) and that hereafter there will be no *Time* for us. (Rev. 10.)

Examine yourselves, and see if you have made the *best Use* of your *Time*. Make *speedy Amends* for past Losses, by well-employing it for the future. Remember *Time* is *precious*; remember it is *short*; and what you lose, you lose *for ever*. Let every *Minute* be as religiously husbanded, as if it were reveal'd to be the *last* of your Lives.

30th Day. On Redeeming lost Time.

REFLECTION II.

WE have been lavish of our *Time*. How shall we retrieve it? By a *sorrowful Heart* for what is past; and by making the *best Use* of the *Time* to come. Were the Merchant taught how to recover his *lost Vessel*,

sel, what would he not do ? And are we not sollicitous in retrieving *lost Time*, when we are told the *Way*, and that it is in our Power to do it ? Methinks, I hear the repenting Groans of the *dying Sinner*. Oh ! that I were now in the Condition I was in, such a Day of my Life ; when I was seriously reflecting on the *Loss of Time* : Oh ! that I had now the *same Health and Strength* ! My God ! what wou'd I not do ? But alas ! it is *too late* : *My Neglect of Time racks my expiring Soul*. Let this Warning awaken us.

Were it reveal'd we should die before the End of the *next Month*, I am of Opinion, we should carefully employ our *Time* : We should spend it in the Exercise of *good Works* ; in seeking a *Reconciliation* with our offended *God*. Let us do so now, since 'tis altogether uncertain, whether we shall live a *Week* or even a *Day* longer.

We have a *God* to obey : He commands us to direct every Action of our Lives to his holy Service ; and can this be, without a *good Use of Time* ? We have a *Soul* to save ; and can we effect it without a *due Employ* of *Time* ? We have *terrible Enemies* to engage with ; and can we defeat them but by *continual Labour* ? We have a *Judgment* to fear ; it draws *near* ; it will be a rigorous one ; and have we *too much Time* to prepare for it ? *Heaven* is our *End* ; and can we *mispending those precious Minutes*, which were given for the purchasing it ? No ! let us *redeem the lost*

lost Time, by a conscientious Use of what is to come.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can in redeeming lost Time, that you be not accountable for it at the Day of Judgment. As the Traveller [for we are all such] who, having loiter'd in his Way, doubles his Pace, that he may timely arrive at his Journey's End.

31st Day. On Reflecting.

REFLECTION.

WE believe there is a God; we believe we are created to serve this God: We believe the Number of the saved to be very small: We believe we shall die; and that, in the Moment after Death, our Souls will be presented before the terrible Judge: We believe a Hell; and that those eternal Flames are the Punishment of the Wicked: We believe a Heaven; where the Good are swallow'd up in a Sea of Bliss: This we believe; and yet how comes it, that our Lives are so unconfmable to what we believe? How comes it, that we sin without Scruple, and return like Dogs to the forbidden Vomit? How comes it, that our Passions are still untam'd, Failings careffed, Devotion cold, and we make but little Progress in a virtuous Life? Hear the Caule; it is for want of reflecting. Ask the Souls in Hell, how they came into that Place of Torments, they will tell you it was, because they did

did not think. True it is, the whole Earth is become desolate, because no one thinks in his Heart. (Jer. 12.)

Where is the Person who seriously considers, that, by every mortal Sin, he flies in the Face of his good God; that he treads under Foot the Blood of Jesus; forfeits Heaven; is a Slave to the Devil, and liable to his Torments; and yet dares commit a grievous Sin? Where is the Person, who justly weighing the Wretchedness and Unconstancy of a narrow-hearted World, does not contemn it? Where is the Person, who duly reflects on the kind Invitations of his loving Lord, on the Joys of Heaven, and is not spurred on to a religious Life? Ah! let us reflect.

Happy Reflection! which has peopled the Deserts with pious Hermits: Which has filled our Converts with penitential Magdalens: Thousands has it recalled from their evil Ways, when at other Times the most frightful Doctrines, amazing Accidents, and most sensible Graces could have no Effect.

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without seriously reflecting on the eternal Truths: Nothing is more conducive to your Soul's Happiness. The Patriarchs in the old Law were punctual in this Duty: David meditated Day and Night. (Psal. 118.) Let them not out-do you, who live under the Law of Grace, seal'd with the Blood of your dying Lord.

Practical Reflections

FOR

FEBRUARY and AUGUST.

First DAY.

On the Shortness of human Life.

REFLECTION I.

MAN's Days are short : (Job 14.) We must leave behind us what we possess and see ; and do we seriously reflect on it ? In a little time we shall be summon'd to appear before a dreadful Judge ; are our Accompts ready ? We shall die very shortly ; and is it not strange we think so little on it ? Let us not rely on the Advantage of Youth ; Thousands and Thousands have been cut off in that Age : Let us not depend upon a good Constitution, when the strongest bodied Men have been surpriz'd by Death.

Life is *very short* : How many are strangled in their Mother's Womb ! How many overlaid in their tender Infancy ! How many cut off in their riper Years ! Daily Experience makes it appear, that there are *many more die before thirty*, than live to that Age. But

suppose

suppose we allow fourscore Years ; is not Man's Life still *very short* ? One half of it is absolutely lost ; to wit, that of our Infancy and Childhood ; and that which we lose in Sleep, and in *uneasy old Age*. Take the best Part of our Lives, all that is *past* is no more than a Dream ; the *present* remains but a Moment, and what is it ? In some 'tis taken up in *laborious Employments*, in *restless Projects* ; by others, in *Vanity, Excels, and Sin* ; by many 'tis spent in *Anger and Vexation* ; by others, in *Anguish, Grief, and Tears*. A *sad Life, and very short !*

A *Drop of Water* in regard to the *Sea*, a *Spot of Ground* in comparison to the *Earth*, is more than *Life*, if compared to *Eternity*. Hear the Judgment of the *dam'd* on the *Shortness* of *human Life* : (Wisd. 5.) *What has Pride profited us ? Or the boasting of Riches, what has it brought us ? All these Things have passed away like a Shadow, and as a Ship on the floating Waters ; as a Bird on the Wing, or an Arrow sent to its destin'd Place : So we Born, soon ceased to be.* Are not our Thoughts the same ? Who will barter an *eternal Weight* of *Glory*, for the *transitory Things* of this *short Life* ?

Examine *yourselves*, and remember your Lives are *short*, and *very short* : Let this be a Motive to the fixing your Hearts, on an *eternal Life*, for wh *ich* you were *created* ; a Life, which is the *Happiness* of the *Saints and Angels*.

2d Day. On the Miseries of Life.

REFLECTION II.

MAN born of a Woman, is full of many Miseries. (Job 14.) No Tongue is capable of summing up the Diseases, Misfortunes, or Infirmities, which so often and cruelly rock the Body. What more common than the Stone, Gout, or a Fit of the Cholic! What more usual, than to have an Arm, Thigh, or Leg broke! How many lame and decrepid are there in perpetual Torment! What bodily Hardships does the Soldier, the Merchant, the Mechanic undergo! Are not these *Miseries*? Why then are we so fond of this wretched Life, and fond to an Excess too, to the Destruction of our Souls?

Consider the *afflicting* Passion of the Mind. How often are we dejected by uneasy Melancholy! How often overcome with bitter Grief! With Grief at the Loss of a Child, or Parent; with Grief at the unkind Usage of Neighbours! How often are our Hearts gnaw'd with Envy, oppress'd with Fear, Anger, and Hatred! A sad Life! to be beset on all Sides with merciless Enemies; and yet, that it should be so generally careless'd, that reasonable Men should shake Hands with its *Miseries*, what can we think?

The Soul has her *Miseries* too: She is blind in her Understanding, depraved in Will, obstinate and perverse; she is corrupted in her Judgment,

Judgment, decayed in her Memory, feeble in all her Faculties: How many poor Souls are betray'd to the *World*, are Slaves to the *Devil*, and liable to his Torments! Are not these the greatest Miseries? Ah! let us repent of past Offences, and earnestly labour for that blessed *Country*, where we may see and love, love and praise, praise and rejoice for ever and ever. St. Aug.

Examine yourselves, and take care you forfeit not the *Life to come*, by criminally providing for this *present one*, which every way is full of *Misery*. Decline Sin, vigorously pursue the Cause of God, and your Souls; thus will you happily begin a *Life on Earth*, which shall never end.

3d Day. On the Certainty of Death.

REFLECTION I.

DEATH spares no one: It is decreed all Men must die. (Heb 9.) It is not in the Power of Man to reverse this Decree: It reaches from the Throne to the Cottage; it universally includes all Mankind; great, little rich, poor, young, and old. The Day will come, when these Bodies shall be the Food of Worms; and why do we pamper them? The Hour will come, wherein we must take a long Farewell of the dear Things of this Life; and why do we set our Affections on them? We must bid Adieu to Wife, Husband, to

our beloved Children, good Friends, and plentiful Estates ; and take our Way into another Country, where all we set such a Value upon here will appear as Smoak.

Good God ! is it possible Men should think so little on *Death*? That they should live and sin, as if they were immortal? That *Pride, Anger, Detraction, Impurity*, should be the daily and fatal Practice of their Lives? O give me thy *Grace*, that my *Life* may be a *Preparation* for this last Hour. I see 'tis a hard Matter to die well; I believe Thousands have unhappily *miscarry'd*: I know a good Death entirely depends on a good Life.

Christians, what Preparation do we make for this *last Step*, which has caused even the greatest Saints to tremble? Go forth my Soul (cry'd St. *Hilarion* at the Point of Death) why art thou afraid? Thou hast near upon seventy Years served thy God, and dost thou fear Death? If this great Saint was thus fearful of Death, ought we not to dread it? Let us, by Self-denial, by Prayer, and good Works, lay up Provision for that *Country*, where we shall find no other than what ourselves have sent before.

Examine yourselves, and be very careful in retrenching *Sin*, the only Evil which makes *Death* uneasy: Fix *Death* always before your Eyes: Keep that *Watch* over your *Thoughts, Words, and Actions*, as if you knew them to be the last of your Lives: Remember you are *Dust*, and to *Dust* you shall return. (Gen. 3.)

4th Day.

4th Day. On the Uncertainty of the Hour
of Death.

REFLECTION II.

WHEN shall we die? Shall it be in the *Winter* or *Summer*; by *Day* or *Night*; a *Week* or *Month*, a *Year* hence? The *Time* is uncertain: We know not the *Day* nor the *Hour*. (Mark 13.) Where shall we die? Shall it be at *Home* or *Abroad*; in our *Beds*, or at the *Table*? The *Place* is uncertain. How shall we die? Shall it be by a *Fever*, or the *Sword*? Shall it be violent or natural? The *Manner* is uncertain.

What *Helps* shall we have? Shall we have the comfortable Assistance of a *Confessor*? A timely Opportunity of worthily receiving the *Rites* of the Church? We know not. Shall we truly *repent*, and in our agonizing *Hour* happily surmount the *last*, and therefore most vigorous Efforts of Satan? We cannot tell. Alas! we know nothing more, than that Death will come as a *Thief*; and likely then when we least expect it: It happen'd so to the worldly Man mention'd in the *Gospel*; *Thou Fool this Night shall thy Soul be demanded of thee.* (Luke 12.)

If our *Death* were revealed to be before the End of this *Year*, how effectually should we withdraw from this *vain World*! With how close a Hand should we curb our *Passions*! What *Devotions* should we not perform!

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What *Penances* should we not undergo! What *Virtues* should we not embrace! We may be in our *Graves* before the End of this Month; and ought we in Prudence to be less solicitous? By *Death* we enter into *Eternity*: O how much depends on this *critical* and *uncertain* Moment!

Examine yourselves, and let your Lives be a Preparation for this *uncertain Hour*. Remember it is he who has *lived well*, *dies well*. *Set your House in Order*, (Isai 38.) and reform the most sensible Failings of your Lives; so that let *Death* knock when it will, you may be ever ready to say with St. Paul; O Lord, it is what I have desired; *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with thee.* (Philip. 1.)

5th Day. On the Death of the Sinner.

REFLECTION III.

THE Sinner is dying. What Dread oppresses his Conscience! What Anguish seizes his Soul! If he casts an Eye on his past Life, the *Disorders* thereof fright him into Despair: If he sues for Mercy, he finds it is in vain: If he thinks on his future Lot, the Judgments of a provok'd God rack his Thoughts.

The Priest comes: He bids him arm against Death with Acts of Devotion; but these are Arms he knows not how to use: He solicits him

him to make an *Act of Faith*; he cannot, he has seldom entertain'd a *serious Thought* of God or Heaven; He advises him to raise up his Heart by an *Act of divine Love*; alas! it has been too strongly fixed on *Creatures*: He presses him to make an *Act of Resignation*, and pay the *Tribute of Nature* with an *humble Submission*; to leave the *World*! O this it is that galls his Soul. *Cruel Death!* do'st thou thus force me away? (1 Kings 15.)

The Death of the Sinner is the most *unhappy of Deaths*: Unhappy, because he is confounded at the Sight of his *past Crimes*; unhappy, because he is entering on a *miserable Eternity*, to be reserved as an *Object of his God's Indignation*. O Lord! let me not die the *Death of the Sinner*; O receive me into thy Protection in the Day of my *Departure*; make that *Hour* favourable to me, and rather let the rest of my Life be sad and sorrowful.

Examine yourselves, and by a *virtuous Life* endeavour to avoid the *Sinner's Death*. Remember what St. Jerome says; *Of an hundred thousand Men, whose Lives have been habitually wicked, scarce one shall find Mercy at his Death*. We think all well, in case we get the Assistance of a Priest, make a Confession, or give some Signs of a *repenting Heart*; but, good God! how differing are thy Judgments from those of Men!

6th Day. On the Death of the Just.

REFLECTION IV.

THE just Man is dead: He has put a happy Period to his Labours: He has consummated his Victories: He is crowned with Glory. *Precious in the Sight of God is the Death of his Saints.* (Psalm 115.) The Saints and Angels stood ready to receive him, and, in a glorious Train, accompanied him to Bliss. Ah, blessed Soul! thou hast triumph'd over Death: No more shalt thou be molested with the vain Threats of a wretched World; no more shalt thou fear the Attempts of Satan, or his eternal Torments: Thou art safely enter'd into the Joys of thy Lord.

How unlike is the Death of the Sinner to the just Man's Death! Set a Crucifix before them; one flies it, as the Image of an exasperated Judge; the other embraces it, as a comfortable Representative of a kind Rewarder: The one dies in Rage and Despair; the other closes his Eyes with a joyful Submission to the Will of Providence. *O Lord, let me die the Death of the Just, and let my End be like to theirs.* (Num. 3.)

Do we desire our Death may be precious in the Sight of God? Our Lives then must edify the Eyes of Men. Would we die an easy Death? It cannot be, unless we lead a penitential Life. Let us live piously, and we shall die comfortably; let us live in Fear, and we shall die with Courage. Ah! could we say with

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with St. Paul, *I die daily*, (1 Cor. 15.) to Sin, to my Passions; *I die daily*, to the World, and to its Vanities: Thus should we die a happy Death.

Examine yourselves, and in order to die the *Death of the Just*; by a constant Meditation, place the *Image of Death* before your Eyes. Remember your last Things, and you shall never sin: (Eccles. 7.) Beg the Assistance of the Saints and Angels; practise a particular Devotion to our blessed Lady, and say from your Hearts, *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us Sinners, now, and in the Hour of our Death.* Amen.

7th Day. On the Examination at Judgment.

REFLECTION I.

AFTER Death follows Judgment. The Soul no sooner leaves the Body, but that very Moment she is arraigned before the Tribunal of her God, there to give up a rigorous Account of her past Life. How dreadful must this Appearance be! An Examination is made, in what manner she has exercised her Faculties, Will, Memory, and Understanding; How she has employ'd her Senses, and comply'd with the Obligations of her Calling; what Improvement she has made of her Talents; what Benefit of the Sacraments; how
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she has answered the Calls of Heaven. Alas! what Plea can the poor Soul make?

The inward Pride and Malice of her Heart is here *unfolded*; her Impurities, which for a time lay cover'd in the Shades of Darkness, are brought to Light; her black Detractions, the Scandal *she has so often given*, her Oaths and Curses *visibly appear*; her brutal Drunkenness, her sacrilegious Communions; all the Sins of her Life past, *public and private*, little and great; of *Omission*, of *Commission*, thro' Ignorance, Frailty, or Malice, *all are laid open* to the distress'd Soul's Charge.

Does she pray? Prayer comes too late: Does she break forth into *penitential Tears*? They are unseasonable now: Has the Recourse to the *Help of Friends*? She is in the midst of Enemies: Can she deny the *Accusations*? It is impossible, an *All-seeing God* is her Judge: Does she cry for *Mercy*? It is a Time of *Justice*. *Enter not, O Lord, into Judgment with thy Servant; for no Man living shall be justified in thy Sight.* (Psalm 142.)

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chiefest Care to get your *Accompts* ready. You don't know, but that *this very Night* you may unexpectedly be cited at the *Bar of Divine Justice*, to render an *Account of your Stewardship*. (Luke 16.) Judge yourselves now, by a daily Examination and Detestation of Sin, and *you shall not be judged*: (Luke 6.) at least no otherwise, than worthy of Bliss.

Alas! 8th Day. On the Sentence of the Reprobate.

REFLECTION II.

THE Examine being over, the Sinner receives his definitive Sentence: *Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting Fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* (Mat. 25.) Go, for ever, from me thy God, thy Father, thy Jesus. O cruel Divorce! Go, thou cursed, from me. Good Lord! is it not enough for the Sinner to go? Must he go cursed too? A Child ought to dread nothing more than a Curse from his Parent; and to be cursed by God! But whither must he go? Into eternal Fire. O unconceiveable Misery! to burn for ever! So long as God shall be God! And what Companions? No other than Devils: Devils his merciless Enemies; Devils in lieu of God and his Angels.

Unfortunate Sinner! what hast thou lost! Thou mightest have been happy with the Saints for ever, and now art thou doomed to be tormented with Devils: For thee was the Inheritance of Bliss prepared, and thou hast blindly exchanged it for the Flames of Hell: For thee was the Blood of Jesus shed, and by thy Sins thou hast made it void. Ah! Who can stand before the Face of God's Indignation? (Nahum 1.)

What will our Lot be? Shall we be placed at the Right Hand of our Judge? It is uncertain. Shall we be confounded with the Sentence

Sentence of the *Reprobate*? We cannot tell. We know no more than this certain Truth. *Many are called, but few chosen.* (Mat. 22.) O Lord, If the just Man shall hardly be saved (1 Pet. 4.) what will become of us?

Examine yourselves and be sure to prepare against this *dreadful Sentence*: Shun all Sin; In your *daily Prayers* importune Heaven to your Assistance: Feed the *Hungry*, give Drink to the *Thirsty*, with a tender Compassion cloath the *Naked*, visit the *Sick*, visit the *Imprison'd*. 'Tis the doing *these*, and other *good Work*, that can only entitle you to a *favourable Sentence*.

9th Day. On the Sentence of the Elect.

REFLECTION III.

COME, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World. (Mat. 25.) Happy Invitation! Come, not to carry your *Crosses* after me, but to reign with me; come, not to renounce your Pleasures, but to enjoy them plentifully; to be Witnesses and Companions of my Glory: Come from the *Vale of Tears*, to the *Place of Joys*; from the *Place of Banishment*, to your *wifb'd-for Country*. You, who have been afflicted by the Appointments of my Providence; you, who have been reviled and persecuted by the World; Come and see how sweet is your Lord, (Psalm 33.) and how

how bountiful a Rewarder of those that love him. (1 Cor. 2.)

Blessed Souls ! We cannot conceive your overwhelming Joys at this Day of Triumph. Never was Victory so grateful after a doubtful Engagement; never Liberty so welcome after an unhappy Slavery; nor the Shore so comfortable after a dangerous Navigation. O Lord, let me share in this Benediction. (Gen. 27.)

Hark ! how the damn'd Souls envy their Condition, but all in vain. These are they, whom we have had in Derision, and in Reproach : We, senseless Wretches, esteem'd their Lives Madness, and their End without Honour; but see, they are enrolled among the Children of God; and with his Saints is their eternal Lot : Therefore have we erred from the Way of Truth. (Wisd. 5.) Do we piously envy the blessed Saints ? Do our Lives speak an ardent Desire of being admitted into their happy Number ?

Examine yourselves, and remember you are to follow the Example of the Elect, as ye hope to have a Part in their Bliss : Be poor in Spirit; hunger after Justice; be meek and merciful; make Peace with Men; be clean of Heart; suffer Persecution for Justice sake : Thus shall you share in the Sentence of the Elect, since Christ has already pronounced these Blessed.

10th Day. On the Pain of Sense in Hell.
REFLECTION I.

IT must be a lamentable Sight to see a Criminal *flead alive*, broke on the Wheel, or *roasted like a Laurence at a slow Fire*; and what is this to the *Flames of Hell*! Think of Gridirons, wild Beasts, Babylonian Furnaces; they are but a Shadow to what the *Damn'd* suffer. *O how terrible a thing is it to fall into the Hands of the living God!* (Heb. 10.)

Each *Sense* has its peculiar Torment: The *Eyes*, which took Delight in *impure Glances*, have ugly Devils for their eternal Objects: The *Ears*, that entertained *Filth* and *Detraction*, have the Outcries of the *Damn'd* for their doleful Music: The *Smell*, which delighted in *extravagant Sweets*, has the *Stench* of Hell for its noisome Scent: The *Taste* is imbitter'd with *Gall* of Dragons; and the *Feeling*, which usually offends *most*, is oppress'd with *Fire* that burns *everlastingly*.

Compute the Years your Thoughts are able to reach to; let them be as many Millions as there are *Sands* on the Shore, *Drops* in the *Ocean*, *Atoms* in the *Air*, still you'll never find an End in *Eternity*: And to burn for ever! If it be a thing insupportable to be confined to a Bed of Roses, for the Space of a few *Weeks*, what can we think of burning in Hell for all *Eternity*! Alas! Who of us can dwell in a devouring *Fire*; or who can inhabit everlasting *Burnings*! (Isai. 33.) Here burn,

here

here cut, spare me not here, provided, O Lord,
thou dost for ever spare me. St. Aug.

Examine yourselves, and, if you are in a State of mortal Sin, speedily repent: You must repent, or burn. Dread to sleep in that unhappy State; who knows whether you shall live till Morning? Meditate daily on this Place of Torments; and remember, there is but a small Thread of Life betwixt the Sinner and Hell.

11th Day. On the Pain of the Damn'd.

REFLECTION II.

NOTHING less than God can truly satisfy Man's Soul; though in this Life it be vainly led away by a thousand Amusements: It has a natural Idea of the Grandeur of God; and is no sooner deliver'd from the dark Prison of the Body, but it is carried on, with a kind of Violence to the Possession of him; and can find no Rest, but in that sovereign Good. Hence it is, that of all the Racks the Damn'd undergo, there is none so tormenting as the Loss of God. They are sensible he is the unspeakable Joy of Angels; and not to possess him is their greatest Torment: They know him to be infinitely good and amiable; and it is their Hell that they cannot love him.

If such a heavy Sadness naturally fills our Hearts at the last Farewell of a beloved Friend or Parent, that Death itself is not more afflicting, how killing a Grief must oppress these

Souls, who know they have lost, and what it is to lose their God, their Redeemer, the best of Fathers? The *Flames* of Hell are not to be compared to it; there are no Miseries like those of the Soul. O good Jesus, Illuminate my Eyes, that I sleep not in Sin; nor let my Enemy say, I have prevailed against him. (Ps. 12.)

Absalom took it for an unparallel'd Affliction, to be deprived of the Sight of his Father David: *Why came I from Gessur?* I beg I may see the Face of the King; if he be mindful of my Iniquity, let him kill me. (2 Kings 14.) If this were so, what must the *Damn'd* think of losing God, and of losing him for ever! Ah! let nothing in this World be put in Balance with him; let the rueful Misfortune of these unhappy Souls be an Instruction to us.

Examine yourselves, and resolve rather to hazard all that is dear to you in this World, than lose your God. Be always upon your guard; and whenever the Devil shall offer to attack you, foil him with this Weapon; What shall I lose God for a Trifle? A God so gracious, as to have preserved me from that *Pri-
cipice*, where Thousands are lamenting for Sins much less than I have committed?

12th Day. On the Pains of Purgatory.

REFLECTION III.

SUM up the most cruel Torments that have ever been invented, Fires, Swords, Racks, Dungeons; all are nothing to the *Flames* of Purgatory.

Purgatory. It is a *Fire* kindled by an Almighty God; a *Fire* so active, as to burn *Souls*; and to burn, not for a Day, a Week, a Month, but perhaps for a thousand Years, and more, without consuming them. *Lord, rebuke me not in thy Fury, nor chastise me in thy Wrath.* (Psalm 37.)

God is *merciful*? he is a *tender Father*, and the *best* of Fathers: The *Souls* in *Purgatory* are his *Children*; by his eternal Decrees he has enrolled them in the Number of his *Saints*; and yet, by reason of their *venial Sins*, or because they have not *satisfy'd* for *former great ones*, this *loving Father* will have his dear *Children* lie *long tormented in those Flames*. O! how displeasing to Almighty God is even *venial Sin*, which perhaps the *best* of us make so slight account of!

Christians, it is in our Power to make *Satisfaction* for past Offences, by *easy Acts* of Penance; and why don't we perform them? We may, with *little Labour*, prevent what one Day else will cost us dear; and why do we neglect it? *One truly penitential Tear* may, at present, extinguish that *Fire*, which a *Torrent* of Tears will not effect hereafter; and why don't we weep? O Lord! *Cleanse me in this Life, and make me such, that I may never need the purging Fire.* St. Aug.

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all *venial Sins*, more especially those dangerous ones of *Custom* and *Neglect*, which are the *Fuel* that feeds this *glowing Fire*. Let the

Flames of Purgatory blaze before your Eyes, that, by a Christian Fear, you may escape its Torments. By *Alms, Prayer, and other good Works*, make *Satisfaction* in this World for your *past Offences*, that you may not suffer in the World to come.

13th Day. On the Souls in Purgatory.

REFLECTION IV.

Should we see a Person, by some sad Accident, encompas'd on all sides with a *raging Fire*; did we hear him lamentably crying out for Help from amidst the *Flames*; we should certainly be very unnatural, did we not offer to help him, were it in our *Power*; or if not in our *Power*, we must be judg'd to have *Hearts of Stone*, in case we pitied him not; And can we, without *Help or Pity*, behold a Friend, a Wife, a Child, a Parent, in the *Flames of Purgatory*, and perhaps *burning* on our Account? Perhaps because they have been *too fond* of us.

It is very likely we have some Friends in that Place of Punishment: Alas, poor Souls! they suffer much: Hear their Cries; *Take Pity on me, at least you my Friends, take Pity on me.* (Job 19.) These are their *Moans*; they sollicit us by their *Tears*, and that Christian *Compassion* we ought to shew them; they cannot do the least thing towards their own Deliverance; but it is in our *Power* to merit for them.

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Therefore let us do it: A *Prayer*, an *Alms*, a *Self-denial*, offer'd with a *good Intention* for the Benefit of these *Souls*, what will it not effect? Ah! how great a *Comfort* will it be to us, when all those *Souls*, whom we have relieved out of *Purgatory* by our charitable Endeavours, shall appear in our *Defence* before a terrible *Judge*! How many Friends shall we thus engage to help us, when ourselves shall come into this Place of *Torments*! Certainly, *it is wholesome Cogitation to pray for the Dead.* (2 Mac. 12.)

Examine yourselves, and be not backward in assisting the poor suffering *Souls* in *Purgatory*: Help them by your *Prayers*; give now and then an *Alms* for their Relief: fail not to afford them those charitable *Succours*, which you yourselves would *wish for* in the like Circumstances.

14th Day. *On the Bliss of Heaven.*

R E F L E C T I O N .

LOOK up at the Sun, Moon, Stars, and Firmament; propose to your Thoughts whatever you can imagine great or charming, it infinitely falls short of the *Bliss of Heaven*: Neither has the Eye seen, nor Ear heard, nor can it enter into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for them that love him. 2 Cor. 2.)

God can give no more than himself: He is the Happiness of the most blessed Trinity; and

this *Heaven* affords the Saints : They *possess* their God without Disturbance, for they cannot lose him : They *love* him without Interruption, for he fills their Hearts : They *behold* him without ceasing, because every Moment discovers to them new Objects of *Joy*. Ah ! *Blessed is that People whose Lord is their God.* (Psalm 143.)

How many *Saints* have left the *World* to purchase *Heaven* ! How many have *voluntarily* shed their *Blood* to inherit this *Kingdom* ! How many, at this time, have relinquish'd Father, Mother, and all that is *dear* in this *World*, that, by a *recluse* and *penitential Life*, they may gain this *Bliss* ! Alas ! the *Haircloth* of *Confessors*, or the *Racks* of *Martyrs*, have no *Proportion* to that *Glory* which has been revealed to them. (Rom. 8.) Our purchasing *Heaven* cost the *Blood* of a *God*; yet he thought it not purchased at too dear a Rate: With a joyful *Willingness* he bore his *Cross* for us; such was the *Idea* he had of our *Bliss*. (Heb. 12.) Christians, shall we do nothing for ourselves ? Shall we not strive for *Heaven*, by an Imitation of the *Life* of *Christ* and his *Saints* ?

Examine yourselves, and let the *Bliss* of *Heaven* be the *Object* of your *Thoughts*, the *Center* of your *Hearts* : *Wean* your *Affections* from a *deceitful World* : Say with St. *Augustin*, *O Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our Hearts cannot rest, till they rest in thee.*

15th Day. On the Occasions of Sin.

R E F L E C T I O N.

Should we see a Person offering to walk on the slippery Brink of a frightful Precipice ; did we see a *Mariner* putting to Sea amidst Rocks and Shelves, in a threatening Storm, we should conclude them to be in a *certain* Way of being lost : And is not the Person, who puts himself into the *Occasions of Sin*, in as desperate a Condition, as to the Concerns of his *Soul* ? When the Devil *vigorously* besieges him *without*, when his Passions are heated *within*, and ready for a Flame. Alas ! the Devil at *any time* is strong enough for us : The *implacable Hatred* he bears us, his *wily Artifices*, and our own *Weaknesses*, render our Condition so very *dangerous*, that truly we have not the least Reason to afford him Arms for our fatal Overthrow.

God has promised us his Assistance, in Time of *Temptation*, but never to those who presume to *tempt him* : And do we not *tempt* God, when we throw our *weak selves* into the very Jaws of a devouring Enemy, and after all expect a *Deliverance* ? St. Peter relied *too much* on his own Strength ; he *rashly* threw himself into the immediate Occasions of denying his Master ; and what was the Result of it ? He flatly *denied him*, and confirmed his Denial with an *Oath*. (Mark 14.) Let the Fall of this *Apostle* be a Warning to us ; we have

have not perhaps half his Strength, and dare we expose ourselves to as great Dangers?

The Saints with Fear and Trembling work out their Salvation: (Philip. 2.) They never thought themselves secure in this World, though they utterly renounced whatever might give the least Occasion to Sin: And can we Sinner go on unconcern'd? Can we think the Grace of God is at our Command; and that when we look our Enemies in the Face, and bid them fight us, we shall be sure to conquer? No, it is the greatest Presumption. Remember God resists the Proud, and to the Humble only does he give his Grace. (1 Pet. 5.)

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all Occasions of Sin; for he that loves Danger shall perish in it. (Eccl. 3.) Fly ill Company, shun dangerous Curiosity, keep a guard on your Senses, dally not with Temptations, take the Example of chaste Joseph for your Pattern; his best Weapon was his running away. St. Ambrose.

16th Day. On the Grievousness of Mortal Sin.

REFLECTION I.

SIN is an Offence against God; and therefore it is in a manner infinite, because God is so: God only knows the Malice of Sin, and none but Devils can commit it knowingly. If an Affront given by a Vassal

o his Sovereign be insupportable, what can we think of the *Malice of Sin!* When a pitiful Insect, begot in Sin, a wretched *Worm*, whose crawling upon its Fellow-dust is no more than it deserves, shall fly in the Face of an Almighty Majesty; no wonder *Sin* is so enormous, as to require the *Blood* of a *God* to cancel it!

God has *created* us to be happy with him; he has *redeemed* us with the Price of his most precious Blood; he has *called* us to the true Faith; he *satisfies* our Souls with his Heavenly Graces; he gives us *Bread*, the *Air* we breathe, the *Life* we spend; and can we ungratefully prefer before him the unreasonable Satisfaction of a *shameful Passion?* Can we be so *unnatural*, as to use his Blessings for Arms against him; to make our *Senses* the Instruments of *Sin*, and these *Bodies* too which he has so often sanctify'd with the most blessed *Sacrament?* Ah! let us never more be guilty of so black an *Ingratitude.*

Find out a *Place* where God cannot *see* you, and you shall have Leave to *Sin*: But where will that be? If you ascend up to Heaven, *he is there*; if you descend into Hell, *he is there*; if you take Wing and fly to the remotest Corners of the Earth, *he is there*: (Psal. 138.) Your *daily Actions*, your most *secret Thoughts*, are all laid open to his adorable *Eye*; and dare you offend him in his Almighty *Presence?*

Examine

Examine yourselves, and from this time forward detest *Sin*. It was *Sin* made Jesus bleed in the Garden ; it was *Sin* caused him to bleed at the Pillar, and on the Cross. Be always on the Watch ; and whenever you find yourselves tempted to *Sin*, say, *What ! shall I trample on the Blood of Christ.* (Heb. 10.)

17th Day. On the Hatred God bears to Sin.

REFLECTION. II.

TH E most desperate Hatred Men in this World can bear each other, the implacable Hatred of Devils and damn'd Souls towards God, cannot equal that utter Aversion God has for *Sin* : He loves himself with an infinite Love ; infinite therefore must his Hatred of *Sin* be, since nothing is so opposite to his Divine Goodness. No wonder the Sinner and *Sin* are hateful to God. (Wisd. 14.) Ah ! how unhappy a Case it is, to be eternally hated by a most indulgent Father !

God banish'd the *Rebel Angels* from the Joys of Heaven, and cast them forth into eternal Darkness : He turn'd our first Parents out of *Paradise* ; he cursed them ; and ten thousand Evils ensued, which the World by Succession must undergo : He buried the World in the Waters of the *Deluge*, and daily condemns to Hell innumerable Souls ; and why all this ? but upon the account of *Sin*.

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For one Sin, a Sin of Thought, and that for Moment, Legions of bright Angels lost their Right to Heaven ; and what can we think, who commit not one, but many crying Sins ; not in Thought only, but in Word and Deed ? Woe to us ! because we have sinned. (Lam. 5.)

God is a most tender Father, Man his Child ; he has loved him from the very Beginning of the World, he has done for him what his Wisdom could invent, or Omnipotence effect : And tho' he loves Man to that Degree ; yet, for one mortal Sin, unrepented for, he condemns him for ever to the *Flames of Hell*. Christians ! can we live in *Sin*, and in habitual *Sin* too, without Fear and Trembling ? O Lord, if thou hadst not borne with me, my Soul e'er this bad dwelt in *Hell*. (Psal. 39.)

Examine yourselves, and be very careful in avoiding *Sin*, which thus provokes the Anger of God : Let not his *Goodness* in bearing with you be the unhappy Motive of sinning more freely : Let not a Day pass without examining your Consciences ; that thereby, discovering the most predominant Failings of your Lives, ye may root them out by a sincere Repentance.

18th Day. On the Effects of Sin in the
Soul of Man.

REFLECTION III.

GRACE is so precious a Jewel, that none but a God can give it ; none but a God knows its Worth ; none but a God could merit it ; and that was to be with the Price of his Blood. Grace is the Fountain of all Blessings ; it makes us the Children of God ; it gives us an undisputed Right to the Possession of him ; and this the Soul loses by a mortal Sin.

Every Soul, in the State of Grace, partakes of the Sacraments and Prayers of the Church ; she is illuminated with the Fire of the Holy Ghost ; she has a great Share in the Merits of the Saints and Martyrs, and in the superabounding Merits of Jesus Christ ; and all is lost by a mortal Sin : Let her have a Faith strong enough to move Mountains ; let her Heart be so generous, as to give her Substance to the Poor ; let her deliver up her Body to the scorching Flames ; without Charity it will avail her nothing. (1 Cor. 13.) She is dead to God ; she is a Slave to the Devil, and liable to his Torments. O what does a Soul lose by a mortal Sin ! And are we not sensible of it ? Can we be at Ease after so great a Loss ?

Open your Eyes, miserable Souls ; see what you were, and what you are. You were at Baptism

Baptism the *Spouses* of the most High God ;
but by Sin you are become the *Adulteresses* of
Satan : You were the *Temples* of the Holy
Ghost ; but, alas ! you are turn'd into *Dens*
of *Thieves* : You were *Sisters* to the Angels ;
but you are become the *Companions* of Devils :
Bewail therefore your Condition, unhappy
Souls ! *Wail* and *weep*, for the Heavens
weep for you.

Examine yourselves, and see if, in the
Practice of your Lives, you *fly Sin* : Avoid
all *immediate Occasions* of it : Keep a guard
upon your *Senses*, that Death enter not
through those *Windows* : Let your *Lamps* be
full of *Oil*, of Charity and good Works, that
you may be *worthily admitted* to the *Nup-*
tials of the Lamb.

19th Day. On Venial Sin.

REFLECTION IV.

A Person becomes not wicked on a sudden ;
the *Light of Faith, Nature, and Reason*,
imprint on our Souls a *Fear of mortal Sins* ;
but, by some *customary Neglect*, or too fond a
Familiarity with *smaller ones*, this *Fear* wears
off ; we look them in the *Face*, and at length
commit them without *Scruple or Remorse*. O
the dismal Consequences of *venial Sin* !

'Tis true, *venial Sin* destroys not *Charity* ;
but it *weakens and cools* the *Fervour* of the *Soul*:
It makes not an *open Breach* betwixt *God*
and

and Man ; but it *binders* the Inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working ; *Prayer* becomes *tedious*, *good Works* *troublesome* ; and the Devil, perceiving us to lay aside our *Arms*, makes the more *vigorous* and *effectual* Efforts against us. 'Tis certainly true, *He that contemns small Faults, will fall into great ones.* (Eccl. 19.) A *small Distemper*, if at first neglected, becomes *incurable* : *Venial Sins*, if run to a *Habit*, exceedingly endanger the poor Soul.

How great an *Aversion* does God bear to a *venial Sin* ! He shuts Heaven's Gates against it ; he punishes it with the severe Flames of *Purgatory*, and oftentimes with permitting the *Guilt of mortal Sin* : Is there not reason for it, when our best Homages redound not so much to his Divine Glory, as one, tho' but a *venial Sin*, dishonours him ? Christians ! let us not slight them ; let us not *wilfully* entertain *Distractions* in our Prayers ; let us not bear *Resentments*, or be in *Passion* at a Trifle ; let us not exceed the *Truth* in Discourse, or by way of *Excuse* ; let us not speak of our *Neighbours Failings*, or with Pleasure hear them.

Examine yourselves, and shun all *venial Sin* as much as possible : Those of *Oversight* or *Surprise* may be excusable ; but such as are of *Custom* or *wilful Neglect* are not so. We are unwilling, even in little *Matters*, to *displease* our Friends ; and shall we make no *Scruple* of *displeasing* God ? Did we truly love him, we should act far otherwise.

20th Day. On Pride.

REFLECTION I.

PRIDE is the Root of all Evil: (Eccl. 10.)

Take it away, and you will purge the World of Vice. Ask the avaritious Man, how he came to be so? he will tell you, because Riches are the ordinary Means of raising him in the World. Ask the Revengeful, Why they are so? they will tell you, that namely to forgive is a Blemish to their Honour. Ask the Envious, Why they thus miserably back themselves? they will tell you, they had rather do it than quietly see another promoted above them. *O Lord, take from me the Spirit of Pride, and give me the Treasure of thy Humility.* St. Aug.

Every proud Spirit is an Abomination to the Lord. (Prov. 6.) Pride threw the fallen Angels into the deep Abyss of Hell; Pride swept off seventy Thousand of David's People by three Days Pestilence; Pride bereaves us of Grace; it abandons us to our Passions; it damns our Souls. How hateful must it be in the Sight of God, when such Judgments follow it? True it is, *God resists the Proud.* James 4.)

What have we to be proud of? Alas! we are but poor Dust and Ashes, full of Misery; of ourselves uncapable of a good Thought; we are Sinners, we have ungratefully abused the Favours of Heaven; the best of us are subject

to a thousand Failings ; and can we be proud ? The Life of Christ was a perpetual Humiliation, he humbled himself to the Death of the Cross : (Philip. 2.) The blessed Virgin and the Saints were humble, and shall we alone be proud ? Go, infernal Pride, thou art a Child of Hell ; thou hast nothing to do in a Christian Heart.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to avoid this grievous Sin, which daily crowds Hell with innumerable Souls : Search your Consciences, for Pride is a subtle Enemy ; it lurks in the deepest Recesses of our Hearts ; it corrupts our best Actions, and often transforms itself into an Angel of Light : Be therefore upon the watch, and pray with David, From my secret Sins cleanse me, O Lord. (Ps. 18.)

21st Day. "On Vain-Glory."

REFLECTION II.

WHAT was A man the better for boasting of the Honours conferred upon him, when the Behaviour of a poor Jew racked him with Despair ? Consider how Jesus was received into Jerusalem with Hosanna's of Joy, and five Days after barbarously crucify'd, and you will easily be convinced that human Praise is but the flattering and unconstant Breath of Sinners : And is it not strange, we should be so generally led away with it ? The Grace of God does not inspire the Saints

to undergo more rigorous Mortifications for Heaven, than Vain-Glory puts its Adorers on for the Esteem of Men. How does it enslave them ! What broken Sleeps and restless Hours ! What Pains do they not take to gain these Ends ; and, after all, to what Purpose ! Ah ! did they take but half the Pains for Heaven, they would be glorious Saints.

What have we to glory in ? Is it Honour ? Nothing is more unconstant ; many, like Aman, have wretchedly fallen from the Top of it.

What have we to boast of ? Is it Riches ? They are not our own ; we are but Stewards ; and do we answer the Charge ? Is it Birth ? We should have been as miserable as the poorest, had we not been distinguish'd by a singular Mercy ; we came naked into the World, and so shall we leave it : Do we glory in the Advantages of Grace or Nature ? Alas ! What have we that we have not received ? And if we have received it, why do we glory as if we had received it not ! (1 Cor. 4.)

Christians, if you must glory, let it be with St. Paul, in the Cross of Christ ; (Gal. 6.) let it be in submitting to the Divine Appointments under the severest Trials ; glory that you are called to the true Faith, and are of the Fold of Christ ; glory that you are Heirs apparent of Heaven.

Examine yourselves, and carefully avoid all Vain-Glory : It is injurious to God, unjust

in itself, and very prejudicial to your Souls. To God alone is Honour and Glory due: (1 Tim.) He is so jealous of it, that he will not give it to another, (Isai. 42.) tho' he has given his Blood for the Redemption of Mankind: Pray therefore, with humble King David, *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to thy Name give Glory.* (Psal. 113.)

22d Day. On Anger.

R E F L E C T I O N .

IT is impossible to sum up the Injuries, Detractions, Desires of Revenge, secret Grudges, irreconcileable Discords, and a thousand other Sins, which are the *unhappy Issue* of the Sin of *Anger*; it is a Passion that only rests in the *Bosom of Fools*; (Eccl. 7.) it makes its *Slaves* insupportable to themselves, and to their Neighbours; it robs them of Reason, Peace, Charity, Grace; it often ruins them for ever. How deplorable a *Passion* must it be, when it fills the World with *Hatred*, and Hell with *Souls*! And shall we be led away by this *wretched Passion*? Shall every trifling Word or Imagination provoke us to it? let us not thus unhappily revenge *ourselves*.

Why are we in a *Passion*? God is not so: No, he bears our repeated Sins with *Patience*, or else, long since, we had dwelt in Hell: Christ was not so; no, *Learn of me, because*

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I am meek. (Mat. 11.) The numerous Calumnies that were thrown upon him by insulting *Jews*, could not provoke him; and shall we *Christians* bear nothing from a Neighbour? Alas! our Sins have deserved infinitely more than what can befall us in this World.

O Lord, remove all *Anger* from my Heart: It is my *Due* to be despised, provoked, and every way afflicted, having so often afflicted thee by my *crying Sins*. O *meek Lamb*, who wert led to the Slaughter without opening thy Mouth, strengthen my Weakness; I see my Heart is *corrupt*, my Passions are in a Flame upon *every Trifle*: However, by thy Assistance, I am resolved to subdue them; I will never speak in *Anger*; I will be *silent* under the greatest Provocations; an *Imitation* of thy *Meekness* shall be the *Study* of my Life; on such *Souls*, I know thy Spirit rests, and they on thee.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your pious Resolutions: Pull down *Pride*, cut off *Self-love*, retrench all *violent Inclinations* to Creatures; from these Heads *Anger* takes its Birth; cherish it not, by persuading yourselves you have a just *Cause* for it; the most *Cholerick* think so: Be always *upon your guard*, and offer up some *Prayer every Day*, in order to subdue it.

23d Day. On Impurity.

REFLECTION I.

IM PURITY is a Vice so detestably heinous, that, by wilfully consenting to it, tho' in Thought only, we forfeit our Happiness : There is not a Sin more Serpent-like, or more difficult to be overcome, when grown to a Habit : It becomes another Nature, and it is a Miracle of Grace must root it out. O Jesus, preserve us from it.

What Christian Heart can seriously reflect on the cruel Havock the Sin of Impurity makes of Souls, the dreadful Misfortunes into which it daily casts them, without spending itself in Tears ? Is not the far greatest part of Mankind infected with it ? Does it not very early corrupt the Hearts of the best inclin'd ? How many are now groveling amidst the Flames of Hell, who would have been Saints in Heaven, had they not been tainted with this foul Sin ! To see Persons meek and modest, free from all riotous or scandalous Excesses, reputed Saints in the Eyes of the World, yet fall a Prey to the Sin of Impurity, what can we think ! O cursed Incontinence.

See if the bad Confessions and sacrilegious Communions, too common amongst Christians, be not much to be imputed to this shameful Sin : See if the Aversion Men have to Virtue, their Obdurateness in Vice, and final Impenitence too, be not the sad Effects of criminal

criminal Impurity: See if the *blackest Scandals*, which infest the World; Murders, Heresies, and the most crying Sins; the Subversion of Families, the Ruin of Body and Soul, do not follow from *this unhappy Head*. Christians, let us not take it to be a slight Offence; let us not plead in Favour of it, by giving it the soft Names of a Sin of *Frailty* and *unavoidable*; let us detest it from our Hearts.

Examine yourselves; and, the better to subdue all *Sins of Impurity*, be sure to fly them at their *first Approach*; it is by flying you are to conquer: Shun all *Occasions*; more especially these two, *bad Company* and *Idleness*: In the time of these Temptations cast yourselves in Imagination at the Foot of the Cross, bathing there your Souls in the Blood of Christ: Pray with Holy David; *Create a clean Heart in me, O God, and renew a right Spirit within my Bowels.* (Psal. 50.)

24th Day. On *Impurity*.

REFLECTION II.

*L*ucifer and his Angels fell by *Pride*, Adam by Disobedience, Cain by Murder; yet God did not repent he had made those Creatures; but no sooner was *Flesh* corrupted by *Lust*, but he grieved and repented he had made Man. (Gen. 6.) O how grievous must this

Sin be, when, on its account, a most tender God repents he ever made his darling Man !

The Waters of the *Deluge* were shower'd down from Heaven, to quench the impure *Flames* of Lust ; *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were burnt to Ashes in Vengeance of their *Impurities* ; four and twenty thousand *Israelites* were massacred, by God's Appointment, to wash away their *Impurities* with their own Blood ; Millions are in Hell upon the account of this *Sin*, tho' they were *redeemed* by the Blood of *Jesus*. O how *heinous* must it be, when it is thus chastised with the Scourge of Heaven !

It would be a Crime unpardonable for a *Subject* to tread upon the *Picture* of his *Prince*, even in Contempt before his Prince's Face ; and is it a less punishable Offence to defile our *Souls*, which are the very *Imags* of God himself ? *Jesus Christ* has redeem'd us all ; we are *Members* of his *Body*, and dare we prostitute them to brutish *Impurities*? Our Bodies are the *Temples* of the Holy Ghost ; *whoever profanes them, him shall God destroy* ; (1 Cor. 3.) and are they not profaned by this *Sin* ? Let us not thus offend the most blessed *Trinity* ; God's adorable Eye always sees us.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can for the avoiding and mastering this pernicious *Evil* : It is a *Domestick Enemy* ; you carry it about you, and therefore the more dangerous, and most difficult to be overcome : Keep a Guard

Guard upon your *Senses*; it is thro' those Windows it enters your Hearts: Advise with your Directors; frequent the Sacraments; humble yourselves; thus shall you overcome this infectious Evil.

25th Day. On Drunkenness.

REFLECTION.

THERE is not a Vice more *scandalous* in itself, or generally more *pernicious*, than this of *Drunkenness*: It ruins Estates, Families, Health, and Reason; it overthrows Religion; it ferments Passions; it damns Souls. Is it not pity to see so many *ancient Families* and brave Estates *drown'd in Drink*? Is it not pity to behold *Men of Parts*, who are every-way gifted for propagating the Honour of God and good of Souls, lose their Reason and *themselves*, by criminally yielding to this *brutal Vice*? How many hereby impair their Health to that degree, as properly to become their own *Self-Murderers*! How many *Drunkards*, at this present time, are miserably lamenting in the Flames of *Hell*!

When such *Sinners* shall be arraigned at the *Bar of God's Justice*, what *Plea* will they make? Will it suffice to say, they have *drank away* the Comfort of their Children or Relations? That they have *swallow'd down* the Bread of Widows and crying Orphans? That they have drawn their Neighbour into a *Habit*

bit of Drinking like themselves, and put him into a way of destroying Body and Soul? That they have *spent their Time* in gratifying their Senses, indulging their Passions, lavishing away their Money, in offending God? Will this do!

Let us not think it lawful to be *drunk* for *Company's sake*; Company will not excuse us: Nor to *make merry*; there is no Mirth in ruining Health, Estate, Family, and Soul: Let us not thus pretend to *drive Cares away*, by drawing on *eternal ones*; there is no *Comfort* to be found, but in *God alone*: Let us not thus pretend to *pass away our Time*: Alas! Time is *precious*; it is not given us to *waste* in offending God: It is *all little enough* to work out our Salvation in.

Examine yourselves, and let no *Pretence* justify the *swinish Vice* of *Drunkenness*; conceive a *Horror* of it; decline as much as possible the *Company* of Drunkards; it is the *Wise Man's Advice*: (Prov. 23.) If they shall reproach you for not conforming to them, *glory in the Reproach*; and tell them, with St. Paul, *Drunkards shall never inherit the Kingdom of God*. (1 Cor. 6.)

26th Day. On Envy.

REFLECTION.

ENVY is a Repining at another's Good, because it seems to *lessen* our own: It is a *Daughter of Pride*; it is the *Destruction of Charity*;

Charity; it is an *infernal Passion*. *Eve* was betray'd, and in her all Mankind, by the Devil's *Envy*; *Abel* was murder'd by the *invidious Hand* of his Brother *Cain*; the *Patriarch Joseph* was sold by the *Envy* of his stony-hearted Brethren; *David* was persecuted by the mortal *Envy* of *Saul*; and *Jesus* crucify'd by Jewish *Envy*: Let us detest it.

Where can the *Satisfaction* be, in having a Heart sower'd with *Bitterness*, or gnaw'd with *Envy* at the *Prosperity* of a *Neighbour*? And yet how common a *Vice* is it! And what unhappy *Effects* issue from it! Hence spring Hatred, Detraction, Contempt, Contention, and a thousand other Misfortunes; which utterly destroy *Charity*, and inflame the World. If the *virtuous Lives* of others be a *Joy* to Heaven, ought we to repine at them? Are we to entertain an *evil Eye*, because God is good? (Mat. 20.)

What are our Lives? Are we not *afflicted* at the *Prosperity* of a *Neighbour*? Have we not repined at his *Gifts* of *Fortune*, *Nature*, or *Grace*? Have we not been *concerned* to see him more caref'sd and esteem'd than ourselves? Have we not been *troubled* at his better *Wit*, *Understanding*, or *Parts*? Are we not *uneasy*, because his *Life* is *irreprovable*, and *more virtuous* than our own? All this is *Envy*. Have we not thereupon endeavoured to *lessen* his *merited Reputation*? Have we not *quarrelled* with him, or bore a *secret Grudge* in our *Hearts*? These are the *sad Effects* of *Envy*.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and let it be your principal Care to shun *this Sin*, so detested by God and his Holy Angels : It is *the Sin of Devils*; the *Envy* they bear the *Saints* in *Heaven*, is *their most griping Torment*. St. Chrys. Had you a *true Love* for your Neighbour, you would never be guilty of it: Beg it therefore in your most fervent Prayers.

27th Day. On Sloth.

R E F L E C T I O N I.

THREE are hardly any Disorders, which are not the unfortunate Consequences of Sloth: An unbridled Affection to the Pleasures of this Life, a stupid Ignorance of the most necessary Truths, a total Forgetfulness of God and Salvation, are the dismal Effects of this Sin. It is the Sink of wicked Thoughts; it teaches much Malice. (Eccl. 33.) Is it not strange, this base Sin should be so common amongst Men, that the greatest part of them should fly Labour like Death itself! Let us not imitate them. Slothful Souls, *how long will you sleep!* When will you awake from your profound Lethargy! Arise, or Poverty, like an armed Man, will suddenly surprise you. (Prov. 6.)

We are here on Earth, as in a Field of Battle; we have numerous and implacable Enemies to engage with; we must fight and conquer too before we shall be crowned; and

can

can this be done without *Pains*? No; Heaven is to be purchased with great *Violence*. (Mat. 11.) For shame, let not a *Sollicitude* for worldly *Things* condemn our *Slothfulness* in the Concerns of Heaven: *Cut down the unprofitable Tree; why does it stand?* (Luke 13.)

See how *Christ* laboured thro' the whole Course of his Life for us Sinners: See how the *Saints* labour'd to gain Heaven? they thought their *Haircloths* and perpetual *Penances* not half enough: See how the *Sun* and *Moon* are in perpetual *Motion*: *Go to the Emmet*, and consider its *Labours*; (Prov. 6.) and shall we alone be *idle*, who have the greatest Reason not to be so? No; we are doom'd to Labour: *In the Sweat of thy Brows shalt thou eat thy Bread.* (Gen. 3.)

Examine yourselves, and shun all *Slothfulness* in the way of Virtue: It is not enough to decline Evil, you must also *do Good*; *not to do it, is to commit Evil*. Labour to repair what you have lost by Sin; labour to avoid Sin for the future; labour to obtain an Increase in Virtue; *be doing something, that the Devil may always find you busy.* St. Hier.

28th Day. On Lukewarmness.

REFLECTION II.

THE State of a Soul in mortal Sin is very dangerous, but a *lukewarm* State is still worse: Hear what Christ tells the Bishop of *Laodicea*;

Laodicea; I could wish thou wert either cold or hot; but because thou art tepid, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to spue thee out of my Mouth. (Rev. 3.) What! does Jesus Christ, who patiently bears with the greatest Sinners; who did not cast off the Traitor Judas himself; does he abhor a tepid Soul? Will he cast him off? O! what will become of us, when we are once banish'd the Heart of Jesus! Whither shall we fly? Christians, Throw off this pernicious Lukewarmness, which thus provokes the Vomit of a God. St. Bern.

But why is it so pernicious? Tell the worst of Sinners of an angry God; found in his Ears Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven? the Alarm of these Truths may convert his Heart, but they make no Impression on the tepid Soul; she is not guilty of crying Sins; her Faults are spiritual; they are Duties performed more by Humour, Custom, or Inclination, than an upright Intention; and thus her Faults, being mingled with Acts of Piety, are unperceived, and oftentimes not prevented, till an unhappy Death shuts her Eyes.

Is it not so? Is not that Person in a desperate way, who is insensible of his Distemper? Who laughs at his Physician, when he advertises him of the imminent Danger he is in? It is the Case of the Lukewarm: Prayer, Reading, the Mass, Meditation, the most healing Sacraments, become fruitless to them; because they blindly imagine all goes well. What shall these poor Souls do? O God, I acknowledge

acknowledge my lukewarm State; and since thou hast been pleased to make me sensible of the Danger, may it please thee to draw me from it: O! let not this repeated Grace, which perhaps may be the last thou wilt ever offer me, prove ineffectual.

Examine yourselves, and ever have before your Eyes the dangerous State of a lukewarm Soul: Remember, that *cursed is he who does the Work of God negligently*: Let this Sentence of Jeremy sound in your Ears; let it be a Spur to sluggish Nature: *Cursed is he who does the Work of God negligently.* (Jer. 48.)

29th Day. On the Marks of Lukewarmness.

REFLECTION III.

Lukewarmness is a Mixture of Good and Evil. A tepid Soul is unwilling to commit a mortal Sin; but makes no Scruple of committing venial ones: She strives to avoid all gross Detraction; but thinks it nothing to censure her Neighbour, or rip up his Failings: She seems to be displeased with Sins of Impurity; but affects very much a soft and easy Life: She does not covet another Man's Goods; but has a strong Attach to the Things of this World: She prays and fasts; but it is oftentimes out of Custom, oftentimes carelessly, and as often with a bad or sinister Intention: She approaches the Sacraments; her Commandments

Communions and *Confessions* are frequent; but alas! how often without due Preparation! how often without Amendment! She has little or no Concern for the Overcoming *small Failings*; she offers not at *Perfection*; and, tho' desirous of going to Heaven, she cares not for taking it by *main Force*. This is the Description of a *lukewarm Soul*.

Is it not our Case? Do we not find this dangerous *Mixture* of Good and Evil residing in our Hearts? If so, let us remedy it, since nothing more *exasperates* the Anger of our God.

O God, I must confess I have been hitherto very *tepid*; but since thou hast been pleased to open my Eyes, I am *resolved* to amend: I will offer up my Prayers, with an earnest Desire of obtaining what I ask; free from Distractions, I will pour forth my Soul in *Acts* of Adoration, and lay before thee my *daily Wants*; by my best Endeavours will I approach thy Sacraments, purely to improve in my Service to thee; all my Actions shall speak thy Glory; I will advance in Virtue, never thinking I have done enough; *Humour*, *Custom*, or *Inclination*, shall have no place in my Heart: These are my *Resolutions*; but, O God strengthen them by thy Grace, or they are certainly void.

Examine yourselves, and thus *resolve*, for the effectually surmounting all *pernicious Lukewarmness*; frequently meditate on the eternal Truths; beg of God to augment your Faith;

withdraw

withdraw your Affections from the Things of this World ; be not misled by the tepid example of others ; contemplate the Life of Christ and his Saints.

30th Day. *On Despair.*

REFLECTION I.

WHAT if our *Crimes* appear before our Eyes in hideous Shapes ! What Multitudes of past Offences croud into our Minds, and sink our heavy Thoughts with the unhappy Weight ! shall we *despair* ! shall we *despair*, when we have a God Omnipotent ; a God most Merciful ; a God, who can, and will help us if we please ! God can help us ; nothing is impossible to him ; his Power, like himself, is every way infinite : if our Minds are oppress'd with melancholy Dejections ; if we labour under the Violence of formidable Temptations ; if our Resolutions fail us ; if our Souls are blind, deaf, and dead ; God can heal and raise them : He has done it ; and is his Arm shorten'd ? Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean : (Mat. 8.) ask not any thing, but what is easy to thee.

God will help us ; he is a God of *Mercy* ; his Mercy is above his other Works ; He wills not the Death of a Sinner, but that he were converted, and would live : (Ezek. 33.) He calls, he entreats, he presses us to return to him, with *Why will you die, O House of Israel?*

(Ezek. 33.) He came from Heaven to redeem us ; he led a painful Life to redeem us ; he died upon the Cross for our Redemption ; and can we despair ? O Lord, contrite and humble Heart thou wilt not despise.

(Psalm 50.) Thou didst not despise the Repentance of Niniveh, nor the Repentance of Manasse ; thou didst not despise the Tears of Saul, nor the Tears of Magdalen ; thou didst not despise the Humility of the Publican, nor the Thief upon the Cross.

Christians, are we Sinners ? Let us remember the Publican : Are we immers'd in worldly Pleasures ? Let us reflect on Magdalen : Have we murder'd the Reputation of a Neighbour ? Let us look on the Thief : Have we persecuted God by a sinful Life ? Let us think on Paul.

Examine yourselves, and take care you dash not upon the Rock of Despair : Remember it was Judah's unhappy Destiny to remember 'tis the griping Torment of the Damn'd : Trust in the Power and Mercy of God, who can, and is always willing to assist you : Implore his Grace in your daily Prayers.

31st Day. On Presumption.

REFLECTION II.

SHALL I presume, who am a grievous Sinner ? Can I delude myself with the Hopes of Heaven, while I live in Sin ? Can I sin

I sin without Remorse, as if I had not an all-seeing God *Witness* of my Works ; or a just God to judge them at the Bar ? How many Thousands have been condemn'd to the *Flames of Hell* for *presuming* like myself ?

God is all-seeing ; nothing escapes his adorable Eye ; he beholds the most hidden Secrets of our Hearts ; he is a *just God* ; he would not be God, if he were not so : The dreadful Effects of his *provok'd Justice* too visibly appear : It was his *Justice* threw the Rebel Angels into the Pit of Hell ; his *Justice* cursed *Adam*, and his universal Offspring ; his *Justice* abandon'd *Saul* ; and every Hour condemns to Hell great Numbers of Souls. *O Lord, how unsearchable are thy Ways ! How incomprehensible thy Judgments !* Rom. 11.) Alas ! amidst such terrifying judgments, who can *presume* !

Did we reflect on the *Difficulties* which always occur in the Conversion of a Sinner ; how *insuperable* they are to weak Nature ; that they cannot be surmounted but by the Grace of God ; and that the *more* we sin, the *farther* we are off from meriting this Grace ; we should have no Reason to *presume* : Did we reflect on those terrible Gospel-Truths, *Many are call'd, and but few chosen* ; (Mat. 22.) that the *Gate* which leads to *Life* is *strait*, and but few enter by it ; (Mat. 7.) we should have no Reason to *presume* : Did we reflect how many Millions, now living,

are fitted for *Destruction*; and that it is uncertain what our Lot will be; we should have no Reason to *presume*. If *David*, that great Saint, was not able to bear the Prospect of his *past*, and *few*, and *repented-of Sins*; can we look our repeated Crimes, and *unrepented ones* in the Face? Can we sin on, under a fond *Presumption* we shall in the end be saved?

Examine yourselves, and work out your *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. (Phil. 2.) Beg of God this *saving Fear*, it is his Gift, and the *Beginning of Wisdom*; it is the most effectual Means to humble *Presumption*. Pray therefore with *David, Pierce, O Lord, my God* with a hopeful Fear. (Psalm 118.)

Practical Reflections

F O R

M A R C H and S E P T E M B E R.

First DAY.

On the scandalous Sinner.

REFLECTION I.

WOE be to the World, by reason of its Scandals : - Woe to the Man by whom Scandal is given ; it were better for him to have a Millstone hung about his Neck, and be plunged into the Sea, than scandalize the least of my little ones. (Mat. 18.) What is the Meaning of all this ? Can the Saviour of the World utter these dreadful Woes ? He came for the Redemption of Man ; and does he pronounce his Judgment in these severe Terms ? It is not half what the Scandalous justly deserve.

The scandalous Sinner ruins himself ; but this is not all : What the Devil cannot effect by his malicious Artifices, he does for him : He corrupts the innocent Life of his Neighbour ; he robs him of Grace ; he deprives him of Heaven ; and, Antichrist-like, involves

him with himself in a miserable Damnation. Good God, deliver me from this *unfortunate Blindness*; may my Life be *edifying* to every *Neighbour*: It is a most unhappy thing to lose my own Soul; but to take part with *Satan*, in destroying *Innocence*, what can I think!

Christian, be not thus cruel in persecuting by thy *Scandals*, the tender Flock of *Jesus Christ*; make not void, by ill *Example*, or *sinful Allurements*, that *sacred Blood*, which thy Blessed Redeemer has so generously shed for us. Thy Neighbour is the *Image* of the living God, created to be *happy* with the *Saints* and *Angels*; and wilt thou dare to *deface* this *sacred Image*, and, by *criminal Importunities*, tear from Heaven so many *poor Souls*, who would otherwise be saved?

Examine yourselves, and if you have been guilty of so *crying* a Sin, wipe it off by timely Repentance: By a *virtuous Life* repair all Damages; by your pious Labours strive to gain as many *Souls* to Heaven, as by impious *Scandals* you may have torn from it.

2d Day. On the Sin of Scandal.

REFLECTION II.

THE Sin of *Scandal* has been the Destruction of more Souls, than all the Sermons, Exhortations, or zealous Labours of the most Apostolic *Missionaries*, have at any time

time saved : I say more : The Blood, Death, and Merits of Jesus ; the healing Sacraments of the Church ; the Divine Inspirations of the Holy Ghost ; all the Instruments of Salvation, make but few Souls happy, in comparison of the vast Numbers that are lost through Scandal. Lord, what shall I do, who am guilty of this Sin !

Look into the World, and see how many are there corrupted by bad Example, by impure Discourses, by immodest Deeds : See how many are drawn into a Habit of Swearing, of Drunkenness ; into a Life of Debauchery : See how many, led away by Example, rail against Devotion, cry down Virtue, and, by detestable Impieties, make War with Innocence. Does it not evidently appear, that the far greatest Part of the World are lost through Scandal ?

Pastors, what Example have you given to your Flock ? and you Parents to your Children ? Masters, how edifying has your Comportment been to your Servants ? and, Servants, is your Carriage to each other virtuous ? Do you not, by impious Discourses, or a wicked Life, sow the Seeds of Sin in one another's Souls ? What can we say for ourselves ? Have we not been too free in our Words, indecent in our Actions, lavish in Expences, too prone to Anger, dissolv'd in Ease, and an unregulated Life ? All this is Scandal.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chiefest Care to shun this Sin : Conceive an utter Detestation of it : Be ever upon your guard ; and remember, there is never a Soul damn'd by Scandal, but what cries aloud for Vengeance, louder than the Blood of an innocent Abel. Ah ! Be not so inhuman, as to destroy those Souls, for which Christ died. (Rom. 14.)

3d Day. On the Danger of a Relapse.

REFLECTION I.

TH E latter Condition of that Man is made worse than the former. (Mat. 12.) This is certainly true of the first Relapse ; if so, what unhappy Circumstances must they be in, whose Lives are a perpetual Rise and Fall ? When supporting Grace, by each Relapse, is farther off withdrawn ; when their Passions grow stronger and stronger upon them ; when to their Guilt there is added a black Ingratitude, Contempt, and Perfidiousness ; when the Devil enters them with redoubled Force ; may it not be confidently said, their State is desperate, and that they are marching on in the broad Way of final Impenitence ?

It is in Relapses of the Soul, as in those of the Body ; apply what Remedies you will, the Case is desperate : Let the Relapsing Sinner pour forth his Soul in Prayer ; it has been tried, it will not have its due Effect : Let him

be cloathed with the *Robe of Grace*, he will soon throw it off: Let him *meditate* on the important *Affair of Salvation*, it will serve but for a *Time*: Let him *receive* the blessed *Sacraments* of the *Church*; he has received them, and what is he the better? Alas! if these great *Supports*, and a thousand more, could not *preserve* him from falling, will they be able to *lift him up*? What then must he do? Is there no *Hopes of Recovery*? Truly there is need of an *extraordinary Grace* to work his *Cure*.

O God, pardon my *Relapses*: I see my *Ingratitude*, and grievous *Contempt*, in *slighting* the merciful *Graces* of thy *Sacraments*; and I am *confounded* at it: I know it is very hard for my *Relapsing Soul* to rise again by a *true Repentance*: However, I *confide* in the *Bowels* of thy *Mercy*, *firmly* resolving never to return more to the *Vomit* of Sin.

Examine yourselves, and see whether, in the Practice of your Lives, you bear off from this *dangerous Rock*, on which so many Souls unfortunately perish: In your daily Prayers importune Heaven for the Grace of *Perseverance*: Embrace these pious Resolutions of St. Paul; *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, Persecution, or the Sword?* (Rom. 8.) No, nothing shall effect it.

4th Day. *On the Relapsing Sinner.*

REFLECTION II.

THE *Relapsing Sinner* is *ungrateful*; he is *perfidious*. Should a Rebel, condemn'd to die, upon having Recourse to his offended *Sovereign*, find pardon for his Crimes; it would certainly be the blackest Piece of *Ingratitude* to return again to his evil Practices: However, it is the *Cafe* of the *Relapsing Sinner*; by a mortal Sin he offends his God; upon the *Fact*, he is condemn'd to the Flames of Hell; at the Sight of his Misery, he has Recourse to the *Blood* of Christ in the Holy Sacraments; he receives the Effects of it; his Sentence is reversed; he is restored to Favour; and yet, O monstrous *Ingratitude!* he returns to his Sins; and, putting God and the Devil in the same Scales, he gives the Preference to *Satan*. Tertul.

Christians! can the *Malice* of Man reach to such a Pitch? Can he thus contemptibly undervalue the *Grace* of Pardon? O Jesus, grant it may never be our Lot; grant we may never prove so very *ungrateful*.

He is *perfidious* too: To *Confession* he goes; at the Feet of the *Priest* he renounces his Sins; he promises to decline his evil Ways; he promises to enter upon the Concern of Eternity; he calls Heaven and Earth to witness this *Promise*, *I confess to Almighty God*; he appeals to the *Saints* and *Angels*;

Queen

Queen of Saints, the *Virgin Mary*; he appeals to the *Minister of Christ* to bear Evidence of his *Promise*; and to you, *Father*: And yet, for a *Trifle*, he violates this *solemn* and *binding Protestation*. O unchristian *Perfidiousness*! is it possible a *silly Passion* should make Men *Traitors* to so *sacred* a *Promise*?

Examine yourselves, and see if you lie under this sad Misfortune: Resolve never to return like *Dogs* to the Vomit; renew these *Resolutions* every Day of your Lives: Remember how *ungrateful*, how wretchedly *perfidious* the *Relapser* is; think on the Judgment he draws upon himself; reflect on the Opportunities he affords the Devil of *upbraiding* God.

5th Day. On Rash Judgment.

REFLECTION.

JUDGE not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. (Luke 6.) It is only God's Prerogative to judge Man; because none but God can search his Heart: It is the essential Right of his supreme Sovereignty, and therefore not to be claimed by any Creature, without doing him the greatest *Injustice*. 'Tis true, he has establish'd a *Spiritual* and *Temporal* Court of Judicature; but for no other end, than to administer his *Justice*: They are always to appeal to the Tribunal of Heaven. O God, suffer me not to usurp thy Divine Attributes in judging my Neigh-

Neighbour; permit me not to expose myself to thy Anger by these *rash* Doings; I have already too great Reason to fear thy Judgments.

Why do we *rashly* judge another Man's Servant, when it is *to his Lord he is to stand or fall?* (Rom. 14.) Why do we lessen, upon *weak Surmises*, that due Esteem he challenges from us? This is not to love our Neighbour as ourselves; this is not to have a just Regard to the *Image of God*, nor to the *Redeeming Blood of Christ*; it must argue a Want of Charity, if not a *proud and malicious Heart*: We shall at length repent it, and perhaps too late; we shall *one Day* be accountable for those *uncharitable Censures* we now make so slight of.

Suppose a Person has done a thing which appears not well, can we tell his *Intention*? May it not be done out of a *good Motive*? May it not be the Effect of Indiscretion or Inadvertence? May he not be *innocent* in the Sight of God? He may; and shall we condemn him? Good Lord, deliver us from this crying Injustice!

Examine yourselves, and mend your *own* Hearts; for from that *malignant Source* this *Evil* flows: Put the best Construction upon your Neighbour's Actions; the Law of God requires it of you: Turn your Eyes upon your *own* Consciences, you will find there enough both to *judge and condemn*.

6th Day. On Detraction.

REFLECTION.

O That we had some of the burning *Coals* of the Holy Altar, to purify the *Lips* of Men from this *spreading Sin*! At every Blow it gives three mortal Wounds; it wounds the Soul of the *Detracter*, the Reputation of the *Detracted*, the Consciences of the *Hearers*; and yet how general a Vice is it! There is hardly any Company, wherein our *Neighbour's Reputation* is not torn in pieces; his tender *Name* is almost every Table-talk; it invades the Tongues of those who are *reputed good*; it pryes into *Monasteries*, and the most *religious Places*. What is our Behaviour? Don't our Consciences reproach us?

Restitution must be made for the Injustice done by *Slander*; but how seldom is it thought on! Alas! how many die without thinking on it! O God, deliver us from this unfortunate *Sin*, which thus unhappily crouds Hell with Souls.

Christians, what are ye doing! Will you, by your *Slanders*, rob your Brother of his good *Name*, more dear than Life? Think how you would relish the Loss of your own Reputation by Slander. Wherefore, do as you would be done by; (Luke 6.) and remember, that those cruel *Thorns*, which pierced our Saviour's Head; that traitorous *Lance*, where-with his Side was opened; the *Nails*, which bored

bored his Hands and Feet, did not so bitterly afflict his suffering Heart, as did the *Detractions* and *Slanders* which the Malice of the Jews heaped upon him.

Examine yourselves, and apply your best Endeavours for the avoiding *this Sin*, which has been the utter Destruction of many Souls: Take care you impose not *false Crimes* on your Neighbour; for this is *Slander*: Never discover his *secret Sins*, unless for his Benefit; it is *Detraction* to do so: Shun the Company of the Detracter as much as possible; for the *Venom of Asps* is under his Lips. (Psal. 13.)

7th Day. On Swearing.

REFLECTION I.

HE that swears much shall be filled with Iniquity. (Eccl. 23.) And yet there is not a Sin more customary than this of Swearing. How many are come to that Degree of Impiety, as to prostitute, on every Occasion, the Holy Name of God to the vilest Ends? Scarce a Day passes, wherein our Ears are not struck with most horrid Oaths; the Streets, Shops, and Taverns ring with them; they are the dismal Effects of almost every Disappointment. Are these the Christian's Part? Does not God forbid us to take his Name in vain? (Exod. 20.) Does not Christ say we shall not swear at all? (Mat. 5.)

The

The *Name* of God is a *Name* the most sacred; it is a *Name* the most terrible; the Angels tremble at the Sound thereof; all the *Heavenly Spirits* fall down and *adore* it; and shall we abuse it? We, who have been favoured with the greatest *Mercies*? Ah! let us not otherwise employ our *Tongues*, than in recounting the *Mercies* of our good God; in magnifying his *Goodness*; in calling for Relief in all threatening Dangers.

The unhappy *Belsazar* had his Destiny drawn upon the Walls of his Palace, for profaning the *Temple Vessels* consecrated to God; and shall they escape the *Divine Judgments*, who, with polluted Lips, stick not to profane his most sacred *Name*? No; every Oath they have let fall shall rise in Judgment against them; it shall demand *Vengeance* at the Tribunal of Heaven, where there shall be nothing heard but Cries of Despair, in lieu of those of Repentance.

Examine yourselves, and conceive a thorough Detestation of this *Sin of Swearing*: Take care of offending pious Ears, lest you draw upon yourselves the Punishment of many *Millstones*: By Prayer and penitential Works reform past Abuses: In small Matters take not the *Name* of God in vain, but ever use it with *Respect* and *Decency*.

8th Day. On Cursing.

REFLECTION II.

THIS Sin may be committed three several ways ; by cursing God, by cursing ourselves, by cursing our Neighbour. Tho' the greatest Misfortune should befall a Creature; tho' nothing but Misery makes up his Life; tho' he be fallen into the Gulf of Rage and Despair; it is impossible he should ever be so unhappily desperate, as to curse God. What ! curse God ! That God who has created him to his own Likeness; who has redeemed him with his Blood ! What ! curse that God whom Heaven adores ; who is the Bliss of Angels; who, at that very Moment, can strike him into the bottomless Abyss of Hell : No ; none but Devils can do it, and those wicked Spirits, who in bitter Rage shall curse and blaspheme for all Eternity.

Alas ! we live in a miserable World ; we are encompas'd on all Sides with blood-thirsty Enemies ; when we fall, we fall a Sacrifice to them ; and shall we, after all, by Self-curses, join with them to our own Destruction ? We do not desire to be *flead alive*, to be *roasted at a slow Fire*, nor to be *cut in Pieces*; and yet can we call upon merciless Devils, or the Flames of Hell, to *burn our Souls* ? Let us dread the Madness. If the World, by so doing, will draw upon itself an eternal Curse, let us award it.

We

We are under an Obligation of loving our Neighbours; we are bound to do good to those who hate us; and is it done by *Curses*? Ah! let us not inhumanly curse those for whom Christ mercifully shed his *Blood*; let us not curse those Souls, the *Conversion* of whom causes Joy in Heaven; let us not curse our own Members, nor our own *Flesh*; rather let us die, than be guilty of this *Barbary*.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to shun this *unchristian Sin*. 'Tis pity it should be so common: Take care you curse not even dumb Creatures; 'tis Folly and Scandal to do so; and the Effect of an impatient and corrupt Heart: Fly the Company of all these Offenders; reprobate the Faulty; it is every Christian's Duty so to do.

9th Day. On Repentance.

REFLECTION I.

THERE are but two Ways that lead to Heaven; the Way of *Innocence*, and the Way of *Repentance*: If we go not by the first Way, we must take the second. Every Sinner must repent, or burn. St. Chrys. We have sufficient Opportunities offer'd, and why do we neglect them? A Self-denial, a truly penitential Tear, what will it not effect! A contrite and humble Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 50.)

K

Repentance

Repentance at a Distance appears severe ; it seems to breathe Blood and Tears ; its enter-taining Discourse is of Combats and Temptati-ons : But if we draw the Prospects nearer, we shall find it comfortable, and follow'd with a Joy far surpassing its seeming Difficulties. If it be a sad Misfortune to provoke God by a mortal Sin, how great a Comfort must it be to be reconciled by Repentance ! If it be a Subject of bitter Grief to lose God, what a Comfort must it be to possess him by Repen-tance ! If it be an Unhappiness to the Sinner to be a Slave to his Passions, and rack'd at the View of his repeated Crimes, what an unspeakable Comfort must it be to see his Crimes effaced, and his Conscience appeased by a true Repentance ?

Are you in Sin ? Repent : Have you neglected the Concerns of Eternity ? Repent : Have you divided your Hearts betwixt God and the World ? Repent : There is Joy in Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner. (Luke 15.)

Examine yourselves, and see if your Repentance has been sincere : It is not enough to say you repent ; your Lives must shew it : Many delude themselves in this Particular ; if they knock their Breasts, and cry, Lord, be merciful to me a Sinner ; if they run over an Act of Contrition they meet with in their Prayer-Books ; they conclude their Work done : But, alas ! it is to be feared they are too often deceived.

10th Day.

10th Day. On the Delay of Repentance.

REFLECTION II.

HE, who has promised Pardon to those who repent, has never promised true Repentance to those who defer it. St. Greg. One of the most crafty Slights of the Devil, to keep an unhappy Soul in his Possession ; one of the most dangerous Errors we slide into, is the deferring our Repentance, from time to time, till it be past all time : It is an Error the most pernicious, because in a Matter of the highest Concern ; it is an Error the most impious, because it springs not from Ignorance, Surprise, or Inadvertence ; but from downright Malice.

Should a Man's House take fire, and a Friend run in to give him Notice of it before the spreading Flame had laid hold of the main Timber, it would be an Argument of the greatest Folly to reply, *there is no Haste* ; let it burn on till the Fire has reach'd the Foundation, and then bring the Engines. It is the very Case of the delaying Sinner ; his Soul is in a Flame with a long Habit of Sin ; it is burnt up with lawless Passions, more raging than Fire ; he is advised to *repent* ; he cannot at present ; let the *Fire* first sink into the Bottom of his Soul, and then he will think on't. Unhappy Soul ! is it an uneasy thing to return to thy offended God ? Is it an Uneasiness to be delivered from the Fetters of thy

Passions, from the *Slavery* of the Devil, from the *precipice of Hell*? Be not thus deceived.

But thou wilt *repent hereafter*: How do'st thou know thou wilt *be hereafter*, much less that thou wilt *repent hereafter*? Hast thou the *Times* and *Moments* at thy own Disposal? Thou can't not be so *presumptuous*. The Damn'd in Hell said they would *repent hereafter*; but it proved not so. How do'st thou know but thy Lot may be the same? Nothing provokes God more than an *impenitent Heart*.

Examine yourselves, and fail not to follow the Advice of the Holy Ghost; *Do not slacken to be converted to the Lord, nor put it off from Day to Day*: (Eccle. 5.) Remember a Christian has no *To-morrow*: Let the wretched *Delay* of the Damn'd in Hell be an awaking Consideration to move you to a *speedy and effectual Repentance*.

11th Day. On Death-Bed Repentance.

REFLECTION III.

A *True Change of Heart* is a Point of the greatest Difficulty: As it is impossible to wash an *Aethiopian* white, or take off the natural Spots from a *Leopard's Skin*, so likewise is it for the *habitual Sinner* to convert himself to God, unless assisted by a great Mercy. If so at all Times, what can we think of the *dying Sinner*, when he is rack'd with the griping Terture of his Sicknes;

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when his Spirits are spent, his Strength decay'd; when his Soul is toss'd betwixt a thousand Agitations; when his Thoughts are dash'd at the Horror of his crying Sins, and a fatal Eternity; what can we think? Have we not Reason to suspect the Sincerity of his Repentance; and that Sin leaves him, and not that he leaves Sin?

What if the Priest shall put into his Mouth a Lord, have Mercy upon my Soul; what if he knock his Breast, or kiss a Crucifix; will this do? Will it make amends for his Loss of Time? for his spending it in Sin? Will this be Satisfaction for his Neglect of the Inspirations, Graces, Calls of his merciful Lord? Will this atone for the multiply'd Sins of his Life past? It is well, if that Commination of our Blessed Saviour be not here too truly verified; *I go away, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your Sins.* (John 8.)

Sin is to be retrench'd by the Practice of Virtue; the proud Man must become humble, the lustful chaste, the passionate meek, the slothful fervent; and can this be in a Moment? Where is that due Examination of Conscience, that hearty Contrition, that sincere Confession, necessary for the wiping off the Guilt of Sin; It is much to be feared, that as the Sinner in his Life-time forgot God, so at his Death he will forget himself.

Examine yourselves, and timely resolve upon entering on the Business of Repentance; let it be accompanied with vigorous Resolutions

of Amendment: Watch and study all the Motions of your Hearts; what Passions are most predominant, what Inclinations second them; that you may be the better able to subdue them by an early Repentance.

12th Day. On Resolutions of Amendment.

R E F L E C T I O N .

TH E restless Enemies of Mankind, which lie in wait for our Souls; the natural Corruption and Imperfections of our Hearts; our Insufficiency and Coldness in what regards Salvation, are Proofs of the Necessity of repeated Resolutions for a virtuous Life: Thinking and resolving go hand-in-hand; there is no reaching Heaven without them both.

It is for want of true Resolution, that the greatest part of the World unfortunately miscarries by relapsing into Sin, and by living in Sin: It is for want of resolving, that the better sort of Christians find a discouraging Coldness in the Practice of Virtue, make small Improvement, and are as subject as ever to multiply'd Failings. Look into Monasteries: How comes it that so many Thousands thereof have left the World, and enter'd into a Course of severe Penance? Their Resolutions encouraged them. What caused the Martyrs to lay down their Lives? Their good Resolutions. What fills Heaven with glorious Saints? Good Resolutions.

What

What are our *Resolutions*? Are they not like our *Prayers*, in general Terms only? Are they not weak and imperfect *Resolutions*? These will not do: No, they must be serious, strong, and entire, like those of the Saints, if we hope to have Part in their Happiness: Heaven is the *Reward of Resolutions* begun on Earth; we must resolve to shun Sin, and embrace Virtue, to spend our Time well, and retrench all Failings, if we hope to find it.

Examine yourselves, and stand to your *Resolutions*; renew them daily, saying with David, *Now I begin*: (Psalm 76.) Let no Circumstances of Life be a Hindrance to you: Let this be your Prayer; *Help me, O Lord, in my good Purposes, and in thy Holy Service;* and grant *I may perfectly begin now, since what I have hitherto done is nothing.* Imitat. Christ. lib. 1. c. 19.

13th Day. On the Necessity of good Works.

REFLECTION.

To be saved we must believe, and not with a dead or unactive Faith, but with a Faith working by Charity in Jesus Christ. (Gal. 5.) Not every one that says to me, *Lord, Lord,* shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he only who does the Will of my Father, who is in Heaven. (Mat. 7.) Cut down the fruitless Tree, why does it stand? (Luke 13.) Cast the unprofitable Servant into utter Darkness: (Mat. 25.)

Go, ye cursed into eternal Fire ; because I have been hungry, and you have not given me to eat. (Mat. 25.) The five foolish Virgins were excluded the Nuptials of the Spouse, because their Lamps were not furnish'd with the Oil of good Works : A severe Sentence of Condemnation pass'd upon the Man who improved not his Talent, but hid it in the Earth. Are not these Texts and Gospel-Instances convincing Proofs of the *Necessity of good Works?* Why then don't we perform them ?

How many Christians are there, who, like the barren Fig-tree, content themselves with the Leaves of good Works, without bearing Fruit ; who have the Appearance of Virtue, but not the Substance ? How many believe themselves truly virtuous, tho' their Works are but the Effects of natural Constitution, Education, Honour, or some human Respect ? How many flatter themselves with the Character of Innocent, because they are not Criminals in the Eyes of the World, tho' at the same time they are dissolved in Ease and an unprofitable Life ? Will not these be justly amazed, when appearing at the Bar of an all-knowing Judge, they shall see decypher'd their Pagan Virtues and Fruitless Lives ?

O God, let not that Day be terrible to me ; let me be prepared for it by a Life of good Works, and truly Christian Virtues ; I know that what I have sown, the same shall I reap. (Gal. 6.)

Examine

Examine yourselves, and be constant in the Practice of good Works; set not Bounds to them, but presevere to the End; thus shall you be crown'd; *Whether you eat, drink, or whatever else you do, refer all to the Glory of God.* (1 Cor. 10.)

14th Day. *On the Necessity of Prayer.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

Salvation is our Affair; there is no purchasing it without the *Grace* of God; and there is no surer Means of obtaining this Grace, than by *hearty Prayer*: *Ask and it shall be given to you.* (Luke 11.) We must pray: Happy Necessity! which forces us to own our Dependance on God, and puts us in the Method of *true Humility*. We are naturally bent to the Corruption of Sin; we are beset on every side with threatening Enemies; the World, Flesh, and Devil, with *united Force*, conspire our Ruin: What shall we do? Fly we must; but whither? To God, borne on the *Wings of Prayer*.

Our Saviour's Life was a *perpetual Course of Prayer*: He repaired to a lonesome *Desart*; where, for the Space of forty Days and Nights, he was employ'd in *Prayer*: After he had laboured all the Day in the Conversion of Souls, he spent the Night in *Prayer*: (Luke 6.) As he lived in the Exercise of, so he gave up his Soul in *Prayer*, and for his Enemies

Enemies too; Father, forgive them. (Luke 23.) Why all this? Was it for himself? No; it was to convince us of the *Necessity* of Prayer.

O sweetest Saviour, we receive, with a hearty Thankfulness, this *Divine Spirit*; our daily Wants demonstrate its *Necessity*; we embrace it as bequeathed us by a most tender Parent; we will cherish and preserve this sacred *Pledge of Love* to the End of our Days; for 'tis then we should beg to die, when we cease to pray.

Examine yourselves, and *pray* that you may vanquish the Enemies of your Souls; *pray* that you be no more Slaves to Pride, Covetousness, Drunkenness, Swearing, or brutal Impurities; *pray* to disengage yourselves from a corrupt World; *pray* that you may die a happy Death; *pray always*. (Luke 18.)

15th Day. On the Advantages of Prayer.

REFLECTION II.

FErvent Prayer penetrates the Clouds; God can never deny its Requests, if duly offer'd; we have Christ's Word for it; (John 16.) Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father any thing in my Name, he will give it you; ask, and you shall receive, that your Joy may be full. Ah! what Encouragement have we here to pour forth our Souls in humble Prayer!

Does

Does the *Flesh* strive to allure us with its impure Baits? *Prayer* is an excellent Fence against those *Concupiscences*: Does the *World* attack us with its criminal *Excesses*? *Prayer* is a strong Barrier against all *Concupiscences of the Eyes*: Does the *Devil* tempt us to the Ruin of our *Souls*? *Prayer* has, and will defeat him; 'tis a sure Weapon against *Pride of Life*. Happy *Prayer*! which thus defends us from the Rage of our *Enemies*, and effectually sollicits in our behalf at the Throne of *Mercy*.

St. Peter's Cross, the *Sword of St. Paul*, the severed *Head of the Baptist*, *St. Lawrence's Gridiron*, the *Tears of Magdalen*, the *Haircloth of Confessors*, all the *Racks of Martyrs*, would never have render'd them such triumphing *Saints*, had they not been fortify'd with the *Spirit of Prayer*: By *Prayer* they were united to God, by *Prayer* they were swallowed up in God, by *Prayer* they were changed by a thrice-happy Transformation into God himself. *O Lord, how sweet is thy Spirit*; (*Wisd. 12.*) how beneficial the *Spirit* thou hast left us, the *Spirit of Prayer* thou hast recommended to us!

Examine yourselves, and resolve upon embracing the good Advice of *St. Paul*, *Pray without ceasing*. (*1 Thess. 5.*) *Pray* when ye awake; *pray* before sleeping; *pray for* your Friends, and for your Enemies: In the time of Temptation *pray* as earnestly as *Seamen* in a Storm, who are every Moment lifting up their

their trembling Hands and weeping Eyes to Heaven: Let the *Innocence* of your Lives be a *perpetual Prayer*.

16th Day. *On the Conditions of Prayer.*

REFLECTION III.

THERE is hardly a Day passes over our Heads, but we say our *Prayers*; and yet, in all Appearance, we are never the better for them; our Lives are as *corrupt* as ever; we are subject to our *usual Weaknesses* and Failings; Humour and Inclination get the upper Hand, and push us on to almost every thing we do. How comes it? What can be the Reason our *Prayers* have so little Effect, when Christ has given such Assurances of granting our Petitions? The Case is evident; we *pray* not as we ought.

We are to humble ourselves in the Presence of God; we are to go to him as *Beggars* for an *Alms*, as a *sick Man* to his *Physician*, as a *Criminal* to his *Judge*, to sue for *Mercy*: Alas! how unworthy are we wretched Worms to ask a *Favour*, and personally of *him* too, in whose Presence the awful Angels tremble!

Our *Prayers* must be *fervent*: What we beg is the *Grace* and *Love* of God; the Source of our Happiness in this World, and Eternal Happiness in the World to come: Does not such a Petition deservedly require our *best Endeavours*? In our *temporal Addresses* we beg and pray; we are not *cold* nor *lothful*, but ever

sollicitous

solicitous for the gaining our Ends; and shall we be less concerned in the Business of Eternity?

An unshaken *Constancy* must accompany our *Prayers*: God many times grants to *Perseverance* what he denies to *Prayer*: Had the *Cananean Woman* left our *Saviour* at the sharp Repulse she first received, probably her *Daughter* had never been dispossess'd. *Grace* would lose its Estimate, *Heaven* would sink beneath our *Care*, if every Sigh or a few Words could obtain what they ask at every turn.

Examine yourselves, and let your *Prayers* be accompanied with these *three Conditions*, *Humility*, *Fervency*, and *Perseverance*; if they be not, your *Prayers* will turn but to little account: Be sure to avoid all *mortal Sin*, for the *Prayers* of the *wilful Sinner* are a *Provocation* to God; in lieu of *Mercy*, he draws the *Divine Vengeance* upon his Head: Be but as *earnest* and *solicitous* in your *Prayers*, as you are in your *Petitions* to some *Temporal Power*, and your *Work* is done.

17th Day. On *Distractions in Prayer*.

REFLECTION IV.

IT is an usual thing to be *distracted* in *Prayer*; the Reason therefore, in the *better sort* of Christians, is the *Feebleness* of *Nature*, and the *Artifice* of the *Devil*, who labours all he can to *discourage* them at that time

time in their pious Undertakings: In backward Christians, they spring from Sloth, from the little Concern they have of advancing in Perfection, and from their eager Affections to the Things of this World; for where their Treasure is, their Hearts are also. (Mat. 6.)

Distractions will never hurt us, in case they be not voluntary: Let us not be too much troubled at them, especially since they are oftentimes the Effects of Mercy: They are often permitted for a Trial of *Humility*, to make us sensible of our weak selves, and to own a total Dependance upon Providence: They are permitted in *Punishment* of past Neglects, and in order to rouse our drooping Thoughts: They are oftentimes permitted for a *Proof* of Patience, and consequently to augment our Glory in Heaven: Why then are we troubled?

O God, I do not wonder I am subject to *Distractions*; I see I can do nothing even when I most desire it, unless supported by thy helping Grace, which I little deserve. Pardon, I beseech thee, all my past *wilful Neglects*: I am resolved, for the future, *speedily* to recall my wandering Thoughts: I will remember in whose *Presence* I am, and wherefore I speak; a *holy Intention*, with a *Petition* for thy *Grace*, shall go before my *Prayers*.

Examine yourselves, and see if these be your good Purposes: Be sure to shun all *wilful Distractions* in the Time of Prayer; not to do it, is to mock God: Be not dejected

jected at *unwilful ones*, since your Prayers are not the less fruitful upon their account : It will be a great Help to you, seriously to reflect on the Place you are in, and that it is to God you speak. O Lord, the Meditation of my Heart is always in thy Sight. (Psalm 19.)

18th Day. On Morning-Prayer.

REFLECTION V.

*M*orning-Prayer is one of the most essential Duties of a Christian. God is our Lord, and therefore we must serve him ; he is our last End, and therefore our first Thoughts are directed to him. *The wise Man shall in the Morning early give his Heart to God, who made him.* (Eccl. 39.) Is this our Practice ? For Shame ! let not the early Homages of the Pagans to their wooden Gods out-do us Christians !

Each Moment of our Lives afford us fresh Instances of Divine Blessings ; and can we be too forward in making a Return of Gratitude for them ? Many have gone in good Health to sleep, and never waked more ; so sudden a Death, and perhaps an eternal one too, might have been, e're this, our unhappy Fate, had not a providential Mercy preserved us ; and shall not the first Thoughts of our awaken'd Hearts be an humble Thanksgiving for so great a Mercy ? Had we a true

Love

Love for God, and Concern for ourselves, our *Morning Thoughts* would be directed to him.

Let us but consider the *dangerous* and daily Occasions of Sin, in which we are engaged; the *violent* Temptations with which we are beset; the *Business* of the World, which almost ever takes up our Thoughts; and we shall be forced to own an absolute Necessity of *Morning-Prayer*: *In the Morning, Lord, thou shalt hear my Voice*; (Psalm 5.) I will offer up and consecrate my *first* Thoughts to thee, that I may spend the following Day in thy Service.

Examine yourselves, and be faithful in the Performance of this indispensible Duty: In Acts of Adoration, Love, Thanksgiving; in Acts of Sorrow and Detestation for past Offences, make an Offering of yourselves, and of all the *Actions* of the Day, every *Morning* of your Lives: Let the like Devotion be your *Evening Exercise*. Examine your Consciences, and let no Pretence put-by this Duty: Beg the Grace of dying well, and finish every Day as if it were to be the *last* of your Lives.

19th Day. *On the vain Excuses of the World in point of Prayer.*

REFLECTION VI.

WHAT need I pray? God knows my Wants: 'Tis true; and he will have ourselves own them too by fervent Prayer.

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Ask and it shall be given to you ; (Luke 11.) not otherwise. Well ; I would willingly pray, but can find no Time for it. A poor Plea indeed ! We can find Time for Eating and Drinking, for unnecessary Sports, for superfluous Visits, for idle Talk, and none for Prayer ! upon the Performance whereof an Eternity depends !

I would fain pray, but the Business of the World takes up my Thoughts. Alas ! for his very Reason we ought to pray the more. How can we hope for Success in our Affairs, if we neglect to recommend them to the Hands of Providence, from whom all is derived ? But my Concerns are of Importance : Suppose so ; is there any temporal Concern capable of being balanced with those of the Soul ? If Affairs be pressing, can we not set aside one Quarter of an Hour for devout Prayer, or raise our Hearts to God amidst Employments by pious Ejaculations ?

It is in vain to pray, since my grievous and repeated Crimes make me despair of Mercy. Unhappy Artifice ! Does not our Blessed Jesus encourage every Sinner with a *Come unto me, all you who are burden'd, and I will refresh you ?* (Mat 11.) Does not the Psalmist bid us call upon God in the Day of Tribulation ? (Psalm 49.) Ought the sick Man not to have Recourse to his Physician, because his Disease is desperate ? Ought the Criminal not to sue for Pardon, because his Crimes are heinous ?

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Examine

Examine yourselves, and say with the Publican, *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.* (Luke 18.) Say with the Church, *We sinners do beseech thee hear us.* Let not these unchristian Pretences enter your Thoughts: When you go to *Prayer*, make choice of a convenient *Time* and *Place*, the better to recollect your wandering Thoughts: 'Tis not in a *Multitude* of Prayers that *Devotion* consists, but in the saying them well.

20th Day. On Meditation.

REFLECTION I.

TH E R E is no going to Heaven without the *Practice* of Virtue; there is no practising it without the *Love* and *Knowledge* of it, which is not to be had but by the Help of *Meditation*. Christians, let us not neglect this great Means of Salvation; let us not, for Shame, think *half an Hour* a Day too much to be employ'd in the Concern of Eternity.

We have a *Faith*, 'tis true; yet so very infirm, that I dare say, to the *Weakness* of it, the Generality of the World owe their Misfortunes: Now, what more revives our decaying *Faith* than *pious Meditation*? We suffer very much through the *Corruption* of our Hearts; through the *Feebleness* of our Will, and *Darkness* of our Understanding; through

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the Force of our Passions and wicked Habits : Besides, we are in the midst of Enemies, the most *crafty, powerful, and the most malicious* : How shall we defeat them ? but by observing their *Motions*, discovering their *Artifices*, recruiting ourselves, flying their *Attempts* ; and is not this the Busines of *Meditation* ?

O Lord, as a Swallow I will cry to thee ; I will meditate like a Dove : (Isai. 38.) I see it is the only way left of augmenting my *Faith*, of strengthening my *Hope*, of inflaming my *Love*, of vanquishing my *Enemies*, of saving my *Soul*. O pardon me, that I have hitherto neglected this Duty : I am very sensible, that my *Coldness* in Devotion, my daily *Failings*, the not *living up* to my *Calling*, the little Amendment of my *Life*, are just *Judgments* upon this Neglect.

Examine yourselves, and let no Pretence take you off from the Duty of *meditating daily*; let no worldly Concerns be a Hindrance to you, since there are none *so important* as the Concern of Eternity. The *Merchant* can think of the necessary Means to secure his Effects, and the *Lawyer* his Cause ; and why not we to save our Souls ! It is in *meditating only*, that *Heavenly Conferences* pass between the Soul and God.

21st Day. On the Practice of Meditation.

REFLECTION II.

Meditation is the Life of Prayer; Prayer is cold, 'tis dead without it: To put in due Practice this great Help to Salvation, it is necessary that first we place ourselves in the Presence of God, and beseech him to inspire us with his Grace, without which we cannot meditate well, nor move a Foot towards Heaven.

Next we are to fix our serious Thoughts on some pious Subject, which this or other Books of Meditations will supply us with; as, of the Perfections of God, and his Goodness to us; of our Wretchedness and Ingratitude to him; of Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven; of the Grievousness of Sin, and of our own Sins in particular; of Christian Virtues; of the Examples of the Saints, and of Jesus Christ. Sometimes imagining ourselves as Beggars before the Throne of God, asking an Alms; sometimes on our Death-bed, given over by the Physician; sometimes arraign'd at the Bar of Divine Justice; at other times upon the brink of the Infernal Precipice; sometimes conversing with the Saints in Heaven, and oftentimes with Jesus, in the Manger, and on the Cross.

This done, we are to endeavour to raise our Affections by some pious Ejaculations. *Lord, 'tis I have sinned. 'Tis I who have done*

Evil.

Evil. (1 Chron. 21.) *O Lord, how marvelous is thy Name!* (Psalm 8.) *I acknowledge my Iniquity, and my Sin is always against me.* (Psalm 50.) *Create a clean Heart in me, O God. How lovely are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts?* (Psalm 83.) *The Lord is my Salvation, whom shall I fear?* (Psalm 26.) *I am a Worm and no Man, the Contempt of Men, and Outcast of People.* (Psalm 21.) *Lord, thou knowest I do love thee.* (John 21.) *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to thy Name give the Glory.* (Ps. 113.) These Affections are to be follow'd with good Resolutions, and the whole to be concluded with *Thanksgiving and Prayer.*

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without taking a *quarter or half an Hour for Meditation*: The Morning is the most proper Time for it: Ever seriously consider the Subject you meditate on; and endeavour to imitate the prudent Gardener who leaves not his *Plants* till he has thoroughly water'd them.

22d Day. *On Motives for Fasting.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

WE are all of us Sinners; we have divers ways trespassed against God; we must make Satisfaction either in this World, or the World to come; chuse which you like best; but let me tell ye, the most tormenting Racks are not to be compar'd to the Pains of *Purgatory,*

gatory. Why then don't we *fast*? when by this slender Self-denial we may make an ample Satisfaction to offended Mercy.

Alas! we have sinned grievously; and, which is our greatest Misery, we are insensible of our Sins: The Wrath of an exasperated God is waiting to devour us: He threatens aloud, *Yet forty Days and Nineveh shall be subverted*: (Jonah 3.) What shall we do, but fast with Nineveh? Tho' this Pagan City had for a long time reek'd in Sin, yet by a general Fast she found Mercy: May not we find the same? Let us imitate her.

One of the best means left for curbing our Passions, and taming the violent Stubbornness of our Hearts, is *Holy Fasting*: It is by this we must allay the Heat of Concupiscence which burns within us, and draw the Divine Blessing on our helpless selves: We cannot doubt of Succour, when we have so many Instances of the Force of Fasting: Samuel and Sampson were the Fruits of their Mother's Fasting; it prepar'd Daniel for Heavenly Visions, and the sanctify'd Baptist for a Fore-runner of Christ. Nothing renders us more formidable to the Devil than this pious Exercise. Ah! let us turn to the Lord with all our Hearts in Fasting, Weeping, and Mourning. (Joel 2.)

Examine yourselves, and be sure to be punctual in this Duty. Let not every slight Indisposition of Body, or Weakness of Constitution, exempt you from it. Seek only those

those Indulgences which are truly necessary. Fast on the Days commanded by the Church, and after the manner they are ordain'd. Let a Sorrow for Sin, and the Practice of Virtue, accompany your Fasts.

23d Day. *On the Method of Fasting.*

R E F L E C T I O N II.

IT will avail us nothing to fast from Flesh, and at the same time not cease from Sin : This is a Fast of Pharisees, and not of Christians : It is to worship God and Belial at the same Altar : It is the highest Indignity that can be offer'd to God. What should we think of a Malefactor, who, in the very Act of appealing for Mercy, shou'd give his Judge a box on the Ear ? It is a near Case to that of a Person who fasts, and yet still retains an Affection to Sin.

Good God, deliver us from this unhappy Blindness : Grant that we may fast from all manner of Sin, and from the Occasions of it, to the end that on the Days of Reconciliation we may find Pardon : We know that to fast in Sin is the Fast of Devils and damn'd Souls ; who, tho' they eat nothing, yet never cease cursing and blaspheming the God who made them.

Are our Passions strong ? We must labour to weaken 'em. Are our Affections on Creatures ? We must endeavour to withdraw 'em.

Have we cherish'd Self-love ? We must seasonably check it. Have we been slothful in Devotion ? We must spur on Nature. Have we neglected the Sacraments ? We must resolve upon a Redress. Have we slighted the Poor ? We must make amends by Alms-Deeds : We must retrench all Failings. Do these zealous Endeavours accompany our *Fast* ? If so, it cannot fail of finding Acceptance with *Heaven*; it is the very *Fast*, which God has chosen.

Examine yourselves, and to your exterior *Fasts* join an interior one from Sin. Let not Custom be the Motive of your Fasting, but your unsatisfy'd-for Sins. Offer up your *Fasts* with an holy Intention, and they will assuredly prove a most grateful Sacrifice. Alas ! when you have done your best, you fall far short of the Primitive Christians, whose Lives were a rigorous and perpetual Penance.

24th Day On Alms-Deeds.

REFLECTION I.

DIIVES is lost; his Crime was Hard-heartedness to the Poor; (Luke 16.) therefore his unhappy Portion is with the Reprobate. The World must be judged, and the last definitive Sentence on the Wicked will be, *Depart from me ye cursed into eternal Fire, because I have been hungry, and you have not given me to eat.* (Mat. 25.)

God

God is our *Lord*; we must pay him our Homages; and since *himself* has declar'd no Sacrifice more grateful than that of *Mercy*, why don't we offer it? Are the good *Things* we have received from the kind Hand of Providence to be thrown away on *Vanity*? Or to answer the Demands of an *extravagant Heart*? No, we are God's *Stewards*, and therefore under an *Obligation* of feeding his poor Children with the *Superfluities* at least of that Treasure entrusted in our Hands.

If *Jesus Christ* should visibly ask an *Alms* of us, we cou'd not deny it him; and does not every *poor Body* represent his Person? Christ says he does: *Whatever you have done to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done to me.* (Mat. 25.) We have no better Expedient to redeem our Sins with, than this of *Alms-Deeds*: It will be an unspeakable Comfort to us, when all those *poor Christians*, we have charitably relieved, shall at the Hour of Death present our Souls before the Tribunal of Christ, and cry aloud for *Mercy* in our behalf.

Examine yourselves, and take care you be not backward in the Practice of this *Charity*. Remember, what you throw away in sinful Divertisements, for the gratifying the Lusts of Nature, or supporting Pride, so much you barbarously *rob* the Poor of: Let not the *Cries* of perishing Widows and Orphans call for Vengeance against you. Let not *Affection*, but the *Indigences* of the Poor guide your Hands; and let what is done, be done for *Christ's sake*.

25th Day.

25th Day. On Spiritual Alms-Deeds.

REFLECTION II.

IT is in the Breast of every one to afford this *Charity*; no-body is exempt from it: 'Tis the *Pastor's Duty*, as also every knowing Christian's, to instruct the Ignorant. Men in Office are oblig'd to reprobate the Faulty, Parents their Children, Masters their Servants, as they shall one *Day* answer the Neglect of it: All are oblig'd to shew good Example, forgive Injuries, pray for themselves and their distressed Brethren, lament the unhappy Condition of Sinners, and Blindness of Unbelievers. Are not these Works the best of Alms? the most acceptable Sacrifice that can be offer'd to Heaven?

A Soul is the Master-piece of God's Works; fram'd to his Likeness, and redeem'd by the Blood of his only Son; and can we unconcernedly see it perish? Millions are running headlong to Destruction; Millions are upon the brink of the Infernal Precipice; many of our Friends are in a desperate way; and shall we not lend them a helping Hand, when it may be easily done? Why don't we pray for 'em, and bewail their Misery? Why don't we admonish them of their approaching Ruin? Why don't we correct 'em, and give them good Examples? Example is more forcible, in the Conversion of a Sinner, than the most eloquent Tongues of Men and Angels.

O Jesu,

O Jesus, pardon my past Neglects: *A Zeal for Souls* shall be the Practice of my Life: Thy only Aim was the Conversion of Sinners; and it shall be mine: *To every one hast thou given Charge of his Neighbour,* (Eccl. 17.) and I am resolved to answer it. Can I possibly love Thee, and not obviate the Offences committed against Thee; Can I love my Neighbour, and have no regard to his eternal Interest?

Examine yourselves, and be constant in the Exercise of Works of Mercy spiritual: They are a grateful *Alms*, and the best you can bestow: They will not fail of a Reward in Heaven.

26th Day. On a pure Intention.

REFLECTION I.

BY our Creation, Redemption, and a thousand other Titles, we belong to God; and therefore what we do, ought in Justice to be done for him: As he is the *Beginning*, so ought he to be the *End* of all our Thoughts, Words and Actions. *Jesus Christ* sought not his own Glory, but that of his Father. Do we seek no other than the Glory of God? Are all our Works purely level'd at this Mark?

Our Salvation does not depend upon the doing good Works, but upon the doing them well. Let me give my Substance to the Poor, or my Body to the Flames; in case it be not referr'd to a right End, it will avail me nothing.

The

The *Widow's* two Mites were more acceptable to God; than the large Alms of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; because, what she gave was with a *pure Heart*: Neither Pride nor Vanity, but the *Honour of God*, and her Neighbour's Relief, guided her Hand. Yes, it is a *good Intention* justifies our Deeds; it renders *Actions* that are *mean*, and *indifferent*, capable of meriting a *Crown in Heaven*.

O God, I am sensible a *pure* Intention is the *Eye* of Virtue. I know it is the *Heart* and not the *Hand* which thou regardest. Where can be the Difficulty in offering it to *Thee*, who art the *Joy of Angels*? I Bless thy Goodness for affording me so *easy* a means of Salvation: I deserve to be most miserable, should I unhappily neglect it. No, my God, Thou shalt be the *Object* of my Thoughts, the *Subject* of my Words, and the *End* of all my Actions: I will not sacrifice them to Idols, but to *Thyself*: I'll aim at nothing but thy Glory.

Examine yourselves, and thus resolve: *Whether you eat, drink, or what else you do, do all for the Glory of God.* (1 Cor. 10.) Slip not a Morning without offering all your future Actions of the Day to this End. Imitate the skilful Archer, by shutting the left Eye of all sinister Intentions, and taking aim with the right of pure ones; and you'll infallibly hit your Mark, the *Heart of God*.

27th Day. On Human Respects.

REFLECTION II.

TAKE heed you do not your Works before Men to be seen by them. (Mat. 6.) 'Tis pity a good Action shou'd lose its Worth for want of a due Intention. There are a great many Christians who are liberal to the Poor; who are patient, meek, chaste and temperate; who are addicted to Prayer, are rigorous Fasters; who frequent the Sacraments, and observe an edifying Regularity in their Lives; and with *all these* have a Reward in Heaven? Are there none among them led away with Humour, Vanity, and Ambition? Are there none that grasp at the *Applauses* of the *World*? Alas! it is to be fear'd their List is numerous.

The Scribes and Pharisees were free enough in their *Aims*, but it was with Trumpets sounding before them: They loved to *pray* in the Corners of Streets, that they might be seen by Men: They disfigured their Faces, to appear to the World *fasting*: Therefore their Reward was their foolish Pride, and the Punishment of it. *The Hope of the Hypocrite shall perish.* (Job 8.) God declares he detests his Doings. He may at present *deceive* the World; but it will not be so at the last Day, when the *Revealer of Hearts* shall unfold all the hidden Secrets of them.

O God, give me the Grace of a *holy Intention*: Remove all *human Respects* from my Heart:

Heart: Let not Vanity or worldly Interest influence my Actions: Let me not thus labour and toil in vain: Let me not unjustly give to Satan the *Fruit* of a Tree, that only belongs to Thee.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to shun all *vain Glory*: It is a subtle Enemy, which damps the Merit of our whole Lives: Seek no other Witness nor Reward of your Labours than *God alone*. In all your Undertakings, say from your Hearts, *God's Will be done*. Say with St. Paul, *If I desir'd to please Men, I shou'd not be a Servant of Jesus Christ*. (Gal. i.)

28th Day. On what the World will say.

REFLECTION.

HOW many Christians are now lamenting in the Flames of Hell; because out of a *shameful Fear* of what the *World would say*, they abandon'd the Cause of *Jesus Christ*? Alas! it is one of the greatest Artifices the Devil makes use of to ruin Souls. They cannot think of appearing *humble*, lest the *World* should laugh at them: They cannot find in their Hearts to *forgive Injuries*, or put up an *Affront*, for fear of being reputed *dastard Spirits*: Pray they cannot, nor by *penitential Labours* work out their *Salvation*, for fear of being pointed at by a corrupt *World*: They are ashamed of the *Gospel*, because the *World* esteems it *Folly*.

Christians!

Christians ! Is it not strange, that we should all believe in a crucify'd God, and yet *blush* to serve him ? Shall we be *ashamed* to be placed at his Right-hand in the Day of Judgment ? If not, why do we *blush* to stand by him now ? What Charms has this *vain* World to captivate our Hearts with ? Or what *Obligations* have we to it ? Is it not *God* who *created* us out of nothing, *redeemed* us with his *Blood*, and plentifully *bestows* upon us all the Blessings we receive ? Did we not at the *sacred Font* solemnly engage to renounce the *World* and its cheating *Vanities* ? We did. How comes it then so *easily* to take place of *God* ?

Let us not regard the *Censures* of the *World*, but what *God* commands ; it is his *Word* must save our *Souls* : No, let the *World* never so much endeavour to disquiet the Birds of the *Day*, we'll give no heed to it ; its malicious Constructions shall never be able to put us by our *Duty* : Let it call us *Fools*, we will esteem it *Mad*.

Examine yourselves, and let these be your constant Resolutions. Be not *Slaves* to a restless *World* ; it is impossible to please it. Remember, that whoever is ashamed of *Christ* or his *Doctrine*, of him will the *Son of Man* be ashamed when he shall come in *Glory*. (*Luke 9.*) Say with *St. Paul*, *I blush not at the Gospel*, but *do glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ*. (*Rom. 1.*)

29th Day.

* over thoughts

29th Day. On Divine Inspirations.

REFLECTION.

A Lmighty God sundry Ways *inspires* us with his *Graces*: He does it by the *Exhortations* of his Ministers; by putting into our Hands *pious Books*; by admitting us to the *Sacraments*; by the good *Advice* and *Example* of the Virtuous; by Instances of his Justice; and, almost every Day of our Lives, by *secret Touches* of the Heart: And are we not *deny* to them all? Will they not rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn our harden'd, our ungrateful Neglect?

As often as we *stifle* the *Inspirations* of God, we become *Rebels to the Light*; we sin against the Holy Ghost; we throw ourselves into the Mouth of everlasting Death. Had not the *three Kings* followed the Conduct of the Star, they might have perished in their Infidelity. Nothing exasperates God more than this supine Neglect of his *holy Inspirations*. Ah! let us embrace them, as the *richest Pledges* of an excessive Love.

O my Soul, be no more a *Rebel* to the Divine Light; be not so unhappily *ungrateful* as thou hast hitherto been, in shutting thy Heart to the *Voice of God*: Now he calls upon thee to change thy Life, to do Penance for thy Sins, to embrace Virtue; make no Delays: *To-day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Heart.* (Psal. 95.)

Examine

Examine yourselves, and take care you stifle not the *Divine Inspirations*. Quench not the Spirit; (1 Thess. 5.) for the more you do so, the greater will be your Condemnation. Whenever you hear the *secret Voice of God* calling upon you, cry aloud with *Samuel*; Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth. (1 Sam. 3.) Regulate your Lives by the *Lights* you receive; imitating the industrious *Gardener*, who thinks it not enough to *plant* his Trees, but labours all he can that they may bring forth *Fruit*.

30th Day. *On Recollection of Spirit.*

REFLECTION I.

THE Merchant is perpetually thinking on his Effects, and the Mechanic on his Trade; the Gentleman thinks a hundred times in the Day of his temporal Concerns; and shall we not sometimes think on Heaven? Our Thoughts are often fix'd on those we love; and we are never well but when they are so; no Business, nor Company, is capable of interrupting them. Is it so with God? Don't the Affairs of this World stifle all Thoughts of him? Ah! 'tis a certain Sign our Love is cold.

My Soul, where art thou? Thy proper Place is *God*; and why dost thou not turn thine Eyes upon him? He ever regards thee with an incomparable Love; and wilt thou

sight it? Be not so ungrateful: Fix some Retirement in thy Heart, where, recollecting thy Spirit, thou may'st refresh it amidst the Hurry of the World, and converse in Heaven.

St. Catherine of Siena, and divers other Saints, were daily accustomed to make this Retreat: Here, as in a strong Castle, they remained secure; no Threats nor Disappointments gave them the least Disturbance; no worldly Pleasures were able to make them forget God: While their Hands were at work, their Thoughts were in Heaven. David testifies, it was his continual Exercise. *Lord, as for me, I am always with thee; I have lifted up my Eyes to thee, O God, who dwellest in Heaven.* (Psalm 122.) Are we more engaged in worldly Affairs than was this great King?

Examine yourselves, and be sure to practise this Recollection of Spirit, whereupon much depends your Advancement in Virtue. In order thereto, make a little Oratory within your Hearts; where retiring yourselves upon all Occasions, you may happily promote your eternal Good.

31st Day.

31st Day. On Pious Ejaculations.

REFLECTION II.

IT is a clear Demonstration, that Almighty God has made this World for our Service, when there is nothing in it, nor happens in it, but what may serve us for a Step to Heaven. St. Francis of Assisium seeing a little Lamb devoured by a Hog; Ah! sweet Creature, said he, how lively dost thou represent my Saviour's Death! I admire, said St. Francis of Borgia, that the Hawk should come to Hand, and suffer himself to be ty'd to the Pearch, and that Men should be such Rebels to the Voice of God. St. Francis, praying on the Bank of a pleasant Brook, made this *Ejaculation*; thy Grace, O my God, flows as sweetly as does this little River. Another, seeing a Tree finely beautified with Blossoms, made this Complaint; Lord, why am I alone without Blossom in the Garden of thy Church? Do we thus raise our Thoughts and Affections to God? Do we make so good a Use of his Creatures? Or rather, don't we unhappily apply them to Sin?

Let us aspire to God by repeated and melting *Ejaculations* of Heart: Let us admire his Beauty: Let us stretch forth our Hands to him, as a Child to his Father, for Help: Let us throw ourselves at the Foot of his Cross: Let us put him in our Bosoms, as a sweet-smelling Nosegay.

*My Lord and my God ! (John 20.) O God
of my Heart, and my Portion for ever ! (Pſ. 72.)
As the Hart pants after the Fountains of Wa-
ter, so does my Soul thirst after thee. (Pſal. 41.)
Put me as a Seal upon thy Heart. (Cant. 8.)
How delightful are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of
Hoſts ! (Pſal. 83.) O Virgin Mary, Mother
of my God, pray for me. My good Angel,
pity and prote&t me. O holy Patrons, petition
for me at the Throne of Mercy.*

Examine yourselves, and let these or such
like pious Ejaculations be your daily Exercise:
In this Devotion consists the main Busineſs
of your whole Lives : It is a Work ſo eaſy,
that it may be conveniently done in all Oc-
currences of Life. The Courtier, Merchant,
Tradesman, Farmer, the Cook, the Houſe-
keeper, every one may pra&ctiſe it.

Practical Reflections

F O R

APRIL and OCTOBER.

First DAY.

On SADNESS.

REFLECTION I.

MY Soul, if thou art a *wilful Sinner*, thou hast reason to be *sad*; but if not, why art thou troubled? Is it because the World *hates* thee? It hated *Jesus Christ*. Is it because thou art *poor*? Thou art not poorer than *He* was. Is it because thy Friends *neglect* thee? *Christ* was forsaken by his *dearest ones*. And how often hast thou thyself forsaken him? Art thou *sad* upon the Account of thy *corporal Afflictions*? Thou hast not as yet, in Imitation of thy Lord, and his blessed Martyrs, *resisted unto Blood*: (Heb. 12.) Is it because thou can't not find Comfort in the World? Seek it therefore in the *Heart of Jesus*.

O how *happy* is the Christian, whose *God* is the only Object of his Desires! How *contented* must he be, when he fears none but

God ! How rich, when he has in Possession the Heart of God ! He must of necessity be wrapt up in a *lasting Peace*.

Did we seriously consider, that all our temporal Afflictions are not only the *Effects* of Providence, but even *Mercies* too, we should not be so easily disturbed at them. Alas ! they are sent us in order to wean our Affections from a corrupt World, and to unite them to Christ : They are sent to make us sensible of our miserable selves ; and to give us an eternal Horror of Sin, which has been the Cause of them : They are sent as Trials to crown us with Glory. We cannot have a greater Assurance of our *Predetermination*, than by receiving Crosses, and bearing them with *Patience*. Did not Christ suffer ? Have not all his *Saints* suffered ? Is it not the *Way* to Heaven ? Why then are we *sorrowful* ?

Examine yourselves, and by a *virtuous Life* endeavour to chase away all *indiscreet Sadness* : It is an *Evil* which has ruined a great many. (Eccl. 30.) In your attentive Prayers crave of God the Virtues of *Patience* and *Resignation*. Humbly beseech him to be your *Comfort*.

2d Day. On Sadness.

R E F L E C T I O N II.

THREE are two Sorts of *Sadness* : The one regards God, and the other the World. To bewail our own and our Neighbours Sins; to behold with weeping Eyes our Distance from

from God ; to sigh and languish after our heavenly Country ; these are the Effects of a pious Sadness. 'Tis worldly Sadness we must endeavour to avoid : *Drive Sadness from thee* : (Eccl. 30.) 'Tis an Artifice the Devil generally makes use of to overthrow the best Christians ; and alas ! how many have perished by it ! It casts the Soul into a dark Confusion ; it makes her jealous, slothful, fearful, impatient ; it weakens her Judgment, Strength, and Resolution ; it gives her a *Disrelief of Prayer*, of the *Sacraments*, and of a *virtuous Life* ; and, like a *hard Winter*, nips the *Beauty* and *Flowers* of her Heart.

My Soul, be no more sorrowful, but labour to subdue this *unhappy Passion* : In order thereto, remove the *Causes* of it. If it proceeds from an *Indisposition of Body*, wait with Patience the Divine Pleasure : In case it should arise from a *melancholy Temper*, recreate thyself by some innocent Diversion : If from *Pride*, humble thyself : If from thy *unmortified Passions*, be sure to check them : If from the *restless Temptations* of the Devil, arm thyself against them with holy Prayer, with the Advice of thy Director ; but above all, the *Blood of Jesus*, in the *Sacrament*.

Christians, let us do so. We must one way or other overcome this *Evil*, before we can think of advancing in a holy Life. Let us look upon it as a Stratagem the Devil makes use of to involve us with himself in a *melancholy Damnation*.

Examine yourselves, and labour all ye can to shun this *mischievious Evil of Sadness*, by removing all the Causes of it. Beg of God that ye may *chearfully* serve him in every Duty: His Goodness loves a *chearful Giver.* (2 Cor. 9.)

3d Day. *On the Obligations of Parents and Masters.*

REFLECTION I.

PARENTS have a *heavy Charge* upon them: They must in great part render an Account of their Childrens Souls. How many are lamenting in the Flames of Hell, for not answering their Charge! *Parents*, examine yourselves: Do you not by your *Severity* compel, or by immoderate *Fondness* encourage your Children to take evil Courses? Are you not *careless* in giving them due Education? Or in making a necessary Provision for them? Do you not, by an *idle Life*, and *vicious Example*, ruin their Souls? Ah! be not so *barbarous*; rather rip up their *Bowels*, and let them die a Sacrifice at your Feet.

Deliver, O Lord, all *Parents* from this *unnatural Blindness*: Suffer them not thus unhappily to *ruin* those infant Souls, which they brought into the World, and suckled at their Breasts to serve thee: Grant that they comply with their pressing *Obligations*, and that none perish thro' their Neglect.

Masters

Masters have their *Obligations* too, in regard to their *Servants*. They are bound in strict Justice to pay them their *Wages*; they are to help and comfort them in their Infirmities and Misfortunes; they are to provide them necessary *Instructions* for their *Souls*; they are to see they observe *Order*, that they go to the *Sacraments*, frequent their *Prayers*, and carefully comply with all *Family Duties*: They are to admonish and rebuke them when there is a Necessity for it: Above all, they are to set them good *Examples*. Is this done? Are there none who wickedly defraud their *Servants* of their *Wages*? Are there none who barbarously grudge them Time for *Prayer*, and other Spiritual Duties? Are there none that throw them off when they are unfit for Service, shewing more Pity to their *Dogs* and *Horses*? Are there none that ruin them by their loose Example? Alas! it is to be fear'd their Number is great! What will they have to answer for at the Judgment-Seat of God!

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to comply with all the *Obligations* of a *Parent*, if it has, or shall please God to make you such. Be careful of your *Children* in their Infancy: Give them good Education, when of riper Years: Be discreet in disposing of them; and help them all you can both as to Soul and Body. If you have *Servants*, let the incumbent Obligations of a *Master* or *Mistress* be your constant Care.

4th Day.

4th Day. On the Duties of Children and Servants.

REFLECTION II.

HONOUR thy Father and Mother. (Exod. 20.) 'Tis one of the Ten Commandments; which unless we carefully observe, we cannot hope to be saved. *Absalom* was a Rebel to his Father *David*, and in Punishment thereof he made a miserable End. How many Thousands are now wailing in Hell on the same account! *Cursed is he that honours not his Father and Mother.* (Deut. 27.) 'Tis our Duty then to love, honour and be obedient to our Parents in every Particular: 'Tis our Duty to pray for 'em; to ask and follow their good Advice; ever to shew them a becoming Respect; and diligently to copy out in our Lives their virtuous Example: We are to relieve 'em all we can both in their spiritual and temporal Necessities; we are to comfort them in their Afflictions, and take the best Care of 'em in their helpless Age. Alas! how can we neglect those, who under God are the chief Causes of our Lives and Being; who furnish'd us with Necessaries in our shittleless Infancy; and with Pains and Labour have brought us up? Can we neglect them?

Servants, be subject to your Masters: (1 Pet. 2.) Are you so? Do you shew them a Respect in your Words and Actions? Do you obey them with a Good-will in what they lawfully command?

mand? Do you bear their unjust Reproofs with a Christian Patience? Do you *clearfully* submit to all deserved Rebukes? Are you true to your Trust? and careful in the Performance of what you have undertaken? Do you live in Peace with your *Fellow-Servants*? Do you zealously promote your Eternal Concerns? If so, you are *Servants* indeed, and will find the Fruit of your Labours in a Crown of Glory.

O God, give them the Grace so punctually to answer the Duties of their Calling, that they may prove to them *Seeds* of eternal Reward. Grant 'em *Patience* in their Labours; make them *clearfully* obedient; and let them not lose the Advantages they may reap from it.

Examine yourselves, and daily offer up your Prayers, that you may truly comply with the Duties of a Child and Servant, if it be your case. Call often to mind the Advice of St. Paul: *Children, obey your Parents in all Things.* (Coloss. 3.) *Servants, obey your Masters with Fear and Trembling.* (Ephes. 6.)

5th Day. On the Mass.

REFLECTION I.

ABEL offer'd to God the first-begotten of his Flock, and his Offering proved acceptable: *Abraham, Moses, David, offer'd Sacrifice, and it was grateful to Heaven; yet all the Burnt-Offerings, Sin-Offerings, or Peace-*

Peace-Offerings, all the Sacrifices of the Laws of Nature or *Moses*, were but Shadows to our *august Sacrifice*. If a Sacrifice takes its Value from the Offerer, and Victim offer'd; how glorious must that of the *Mass* be, wherein *Jesus Christ* is the Priest and Victim? True it is, *in every Place there is offer'd to my Name a clean Oblation.* (*Mal. 1.*)

We are all God's Creatures; he justly challenges our Love and Adoration; let us therefore make a Tender of them in this *Sacrifice of Adoration*; since all the Praises of the Saints and Angels in Heaven do not so much contribute to his Glory. Have we sinned? Have we reason to apprehend there is a heavy Satisfaction due to our Sins? We have here a *Sacrifice of Propitiation*, and we need desire no more: Let all the World suffer to the End of it; let their Sufferings exceed the most dreadful Racks of Martyrs, or Hair-cloth of Confessors; all is nothing to one *Mass*, wherein we have a God atoning for us. Ah! how great a *Comfort* must it be to a faithful Soul, to have so ample a Subject of *Satisfaction*!

We are infinitely oblig'd to make a *Return of Thanks* to God for his numerous Blessings; but poor and helpless that we are, we shou'd of Necessity be incapable, were it not for this *Sacrifice of Thanksgiving*; whereby we are enabled to make a *worthy Return* of a Present *worthy* of God; that is, the *precious Body* of the Son of God. If Christ has said,

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Ask and you shall receive ; (John 16.) can he refuse us any thing in this Sacrifice of Impetration, where his own sacred Self cries aloud for Mercy ? No, our Petitions must be granted.

Examine yourselves, and devoutly offer up the *holy Mass* for these four Ends : Let not a Neglect of this great Means of Salvation rise in Judgment against you : If the *Mass* were celebrated but in one Place of this Kingdom, how desirously should we hear it ? and ought we to be *less sollicitous*, because we have a daily Opportunity of assisting at it ?

6th Day. On Hearing Mass.

REFLECTION II.

WE often hear *Mass*, and it is much to be fear'd with very little Benefit : Is it not strange that any Person should be so *rude* as to assist thereat in a *careless* manner, either lolling, sleeping, prattling, gazing about, or negligently distracted ? And yet how many thus comport themselves ! No, this is not to offer a *Sacrifice of Adoration*, it cannot be a likely means for obtaining Favours of Heaven. Is this our Behaviour in the Presence of a *God*, in whose Sight the *Angels* are not pure, and the Pillars of Heaven tremble ? Is this our Carriage at that *very time*, when the Divine Goodness offers himself a *Victim* for our Sins, and gives us the greatest Marks of Mercy ? Ah ! let it not be said ; let us not draw upon ourselves

ourselves by these unchristian Doings the Curse of God, in lieu of Mercy.

To hear Mass well, it must be with *Attention, Respect, and Devotion*: With *Attention*, by fixing the Mind on the Mysteries and Ceremonies; with *Respect*, in being present with an exterior Modesty, and interior Reverence of the Soul; with *Devotion*, by stirring up in ourselves different Acts of Virtue.

Christians, behold in this Mystery Christ your Lord offering himself a *Sacrifice* to his Father, for your Sins: Behold him in a State of *Humility* and *Penance*, clothed with the *Appearances* of Bread and Wine, as with Sack-cloth and Ashes, for your Sins: Behold him an *Advocate* to his Eternal Father, for your Sins. Let us follow his Example; let us sacrifice our Hearts entirely to him; let us do Penance, and embrace Humility; let us pray for all, even our most professed Enemies.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to assist at this *Divine Sacrifice* with a religious *Attention, Respect, and Devotion*: Let your first Business be to offer it up jointly with the *Priest*, and then go on with him through all the different Parts thereof: There cannot be a more effectual Means for the avoiding Distractions, nourishing Devotion, and by consequence of receiving the happy Fruits of this *Divine Sacrifice*.

7th Day.

7th Day. On Confession.

REFLECTION I.

*R*eceive ye the Holy Ghost; whose Sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose Sins you shall retain they are retained. (John 20) They are the Words of Jesus Christ deliver'd to his Apostles, and in them to the Priests of his Apostolic Church to the End of the World: We cannot question their Power or Authority; they are the undisputed Judges and Physicians of our Souls, and therefore are we bound to lay our Wounds and Guilt before them as we hope for Pardon: To think it enough to confess to God alone, is to evacuate the Gospel; it is to make void the Words of Christ. St. Augustin.

The Goodness of God shines no where more bountifully than in this Sacrament of Reconciliation: What should we have done, had we not been blessed with this Expedient of Mercy! I fear there are but few who faithfully preserve their Baptismal Innocence; I fear we cannot say we have never forfeited our Right to Heaven by a mortal Sin.

Ah! my Soul, thou seest what a Blessing Confession is, and why dost thou slight it? Why dost thou approach to the Throne of Mercy with such Reluctance? Is it an Unhappiness to be restor'd to the Favour of an offended Majesty? Is it an Unhappiness to be admitted into the Fellowship of the Saints in Heaven?

Heaven? Thou hast dealt *unjustly* with thy God; and can it be *too much* to make him *Satisfaction* by so *small* a Humiliation?

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this humble and thankful Address. O bountiful God, I adore thy *Goodness* in affording us this *Plank* after a dangerous Shipwreck, this *healing Balsam* to cure our Wounds: I am resolved, through thy Grace, not to suffer this *Treasure* to be lost; neither *Fear*, *Shame*, nor *Slothfulness* shall rob me of it.

8th Day. On frequent Confession.

REFLECTION II.

WE are surrounded on all sides with *cruel Enemies*; we must fight and conquer, or we fall *a Prey*; this cannot be done without Weapons of Defence, the *best* of which is the *Sacrament of Confession*: Yes, it disengages our Hearts from all Affection to Sin, it checks our Passions, it defeats the Enemy, it crowns our Conquests; and why do we not frequent it? The often laying open our Infirmities to the *Physician* must be the *best* means for effecting a Cure; let us not then neglect it.

Go, *infernal Fiend*, I know *Confession* is such a *Terror* to thee, that thou wilt never forbear to use thy utmost Efforts, in order to divert it; but we will not be seduced; Tempt us not to believe it *too much Trouble*, since we

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will not spare the *most difficult Labour* to save our Souls: Strive not to suggest a *Want of Preparation*, for we will *do our best, confidently* relying upon the Divine Grace, which is always ready to assist us: Never tell us we stand not in need of it; for we know very well, that we are poor and miserable, and that our wretched Condition puts us in a *perpetual Want* of so great a Mercy: Lay not before us the *Business* of the World; the Affairs of our Soul's are our *main Concern*.

Christians, the Devil's most subtle Artifices shall never hinder us in this Duty; we will frequently confess; no *Fear* nor *Shame* (the worst and most fatal of his hellish Stratagems) shall be able to seduce us: Where is the *Shame* in seeking a Reconciliation with our offended God? If there be any *Shame*, it ought to be in sinning, not in asking Pardon: Rather let us expose ourselves to one *private Person*, ty'd by all Laws to a *perpetual Secrecy*, than be exposed one Day before the whole World, to our eternal Confusion.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to put in practice what you have so profitably *resolved in*; nothing can conduce more to your eternal Happiness. Never sleep in mortal Sin, but ease your Consciences by a *speedy Confession*. Under all violent Temptations apply this Remedy. Let a *monthly Confession* at least be your constant Care.

9th Day. On Preparations to Confession.

REFLECTION III.

WERE we to be arraign'd before a temporal Judge, to answer the Crimes laid to our Charge, we shou'd without Delay take our Lives in pieces, and with the greatest Diligence search and see wherein we have transgressed: We shou'd carefully examine the Company we have been in, what Words we have let fall, and what has been our Comportment in every Particular; and ought we to be less sollicitous in examining our Souls, in calling to mind the grievous Sins of our Lives past, when we are going to appear before Jesus Christ, at the Tribunal of Confession?

O Father of Lights, do thou direct us in this difficult Task; remove those Veils which hide our Sins; enlighten our Darkness, that we repent and confess whatever we have offended in.

The Arms of God are always open to receive Sinners; he has promised them Pardon; but 'tis upon their Repentance; without the Sighs of a contrite Heart their Sins will not be forgiven; Confession is invalid, if not accompany'd with it: Alas! can we call to mind our Sins, and not be sorry for them? Can we reflect how we have ungratefully offended an Almighty God, and not tremble at the Thought? Can we think on the unquenchable Flames of Hell, to which we have been exposed, and not detest the Evil that has thus exposed us?

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(Luke 18.) *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner ; Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me ; I detest my Sins ; it grieves me that I have offended thee ; spare me this time, I am resolved to amend ; despise not, I beseech thee, the Cries of thy lost Sheep ; reject not the Signs of thy prodigal Child.*

Examine yourselves, and by a serious Search and contrite Heart prepare for Confession ; resolve upon an Amendment, and to shun all immediate Occasions of Sin ; lay the Ax to the Root ; by virtuous Practices tame your Passions ; dread a Relapse, since nothing is more pernicious to your dear Souls.

10th Day. On the Method of Confession.

REFLECTION IV.

BEING come to the Bar, cloath'd with Humility and Confusion, we are to make a sincere Confession of all mortal Sins ; no wilful one to be conceal'd as to its Kind or Number ; no Circumstance to be omitted, that changes the Nature of the Sin, or considerably aggravates it ; no Excuse to be made, or Art used, in disguising the Truth, or in wrapping up Things in obscure Terms ; all must fully be laid open with the greatest Candour, as we shall one Day answer it, and as we hope to have the Sentence of Pardon ratify'd in Heaven, at the same time it is pronounced on Earth.

It must certainly be a most impious thing to lie to the Holy Ghost, by an unworthy Confession; it must be the greatest Madness for any Christian thus willfully to draw the Divine Judgments upon himself, instead of Mercy; And yet how many are guilty of it! O Lord, deliver us from this crying Sacrilege; may we never dare to approach thy Tribunal, but with a sincere Confession, and the necessary Dispositions for so great a Work.

Confession being over, we are to return from the *Bar* with a hearty *Thanksgiving* to our good God, for reversing the Sentence of eternal Death that stood against us; we are to renew our Protestations of Fealty to him; we are to think of the best Means to prevent Relapses; we are to betake ourselves to *Prayer*, and to a speedy Performance of our enjoin'd Penance: Alas! what is it, in comparison of the Injunctions laid upon the primitive Christians? what is it, it balanced with our repeated Sins? Let our Lives therefore be a *perpetual Penance*.

Examine yourselves, and let nothing be wanting to a good Confession; it is a Work which requires your chiefest Care: In every Part of it, beg the *Grace* of God, without which you will certainly miscarry. Ah! what great Blessings depend on the well doing it! what sad Curses follow its *Abuse*!

11th Day. *On Defects in Confession.*

REFLECTION V.

THERE are many Christians who frequently approach to the *Sacrament of Penance*, and yet make but *very little Advantage* of it: They easily relapse into their former Sins, and are almost as proud and vain as ever; they are still addicted to their *darling Vices*, and on all Occasions are ready to indulge their *growing Passions*: What can be the Reason of it? Is not *Confession* a Sacrament of *Pardon*? Does it not *heal* the sick Souls of Sinners? Does it not *strengthen* them in Grace? It does, if well received: but *these* are liable to many Defects; they are not *duly prepar'd*, nor *disposed* to receive it.

How many *slightly* pass over their Examens, taking no farther care, than to call to mind the Sins that appear at *first sight*? how many thereupon go immediately to *Confession*, without so much as thinking on an *Act of Contrition*; or at least do the Work so *lamely*, that they rather seem to *mock* God, than sue for Mercy? Is a Prayer or two, run over in *Haste*, and perhaps without Reflection, a Token of a *true Change of Heart*? How many accuse themselves but in *general terms*! How many leave the *Tribunal*, and think no more on't! How many perform their *Penance* as if it were a Matter of *Trifle*? How many *carelessly* defer it, and *criminally* omit it too! Will this do?

No wonder they carry their Sins *unseen* to *Confession*, and to the *Grave*; no wonder their *Contrition* is *false*, their Confessions *unprofitable*; no wonder they *relapse*, and *live and die* in Sin. Give us, O God, a right Sense of our Duty; may we never enter upon this great Work, without due Reflection, and a careful Application.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to avoid these too common Abuses of many Christians: How many *Souls* are now suffering in *Purgatory* for their *Neglects* in this point! And how many in *Hell* for their *bad Confessions*! Learn to grow wise by their *Misfortunes*. Keep as constantly as you can to your ordinary *Confessor*; he is the *Physician* best able to heal your Souls.

12th Day. On the Blessed Eucharist.

REFLECTION I. *

SO great is the *Mercy*, which shines forth to us in this *august Sacrament*, that none but the God who most lovingly gives it knows its Worth: Here is the most sacred *Body* and *Blood* of Jesus Christ, which Heaven adores, and makes up the Bliss of the Saints and Angels; here is Christ's glorious *Soul*, his *Humanity*, his *Divinity*; here is the *Father*, the *Holy Ghost*, the whole *Blessed Trinity* shut up in a Span. What! has the *World Eternal* thus *annihilated* himself for us *Sinners*! He became

became *Incarnate* for us in the *Womb* of a poor Virgin: He *dy'd* for us; and is not this enough? Must he deliver himself up a *perpetual* *Sacrifice* for *Sinners*? Must his *Immaculate Body* be *handled* by *Sinners*? Must he enter the *corrupted Hearts* of *Sinners*? What can his *Love* do more!

Let us adore his boundless *Mercy* in giving us *himself* to be our *Food*: Let us return a hearty *Thanksgiving* for this *last Effort* of an infinite Love: (Deut. 4.) *There is no Nation under the Sun so blessed as we*: To have our God in the *midst* of us! To carry our Jesus *personally* in our *Breasts*! To be *incorporated* with him! What can we think?

My Soul, dost thou labour under a dangerous *Leprosy*? *Repent*; present thyself; the *Blood* of Jesus is able to heal thee: Art thou *Deaf*, *Dumb*, or *Blind* in *Spirit*? The *Blood* of Jesus will restore thy *Senses*: Art thou *dead* in mortal *Sin*? *Confess* and *Repent*; then receive the *Body* of Jesus; it will strengthen thee in *Life*: Art thou *bury'd* in wicked *Habits*? Despair not; but cry aloud, *Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me.* (Luke 18.)

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this Address: O Jesus, I do firmly believe thou art truly present in the *Sacrament* of the *Altar*; how can I do it, when thou hast the *Words* of eternal *Life*? (John 6.) In thee I place all my *Hope* and *Confidence*; how can I despair, when thou hast favour'd me with so signal a *Mark* of *Mercy*! I love thee with my whole *Heart*;

how can I do otherwise, when thou hast loved me to that *Excess*, as to nourish my Soul with thy own dear *Self*!

13th Day. *On Christ inviting us to himself in the Eucharist.*

REFLECTION II.

Daughters of Jerusalem, how long shall I stay? Why don't you draw nearer to me, when I am languishing with Love, and with the Love of you? I came down from Heaven to converse with you, and to dwell within your Hearts; I have transform'd myself into the Shape of *Bread* to be your Nourishment; I desire to be one with you, as my Father and I am one; and are you afraid to approach me? I am the *Bread of Heaven*, *He that eats of this Bread shall live for ever*; (John 6.) And will you keep off under a vain Pretence of being too familiar?

Never did you meet with so true a *Lover*; to heal your Wounds, I offer you my *Blood*; to strengthen you in Grace, I give you my *Flesh*; every-body has free access to me; the Sick to be healed, the Feeble to be strengthen'd, the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, the Sorrowful to be comforted, the Slothful to be spurr'd on, the Sinner to be justify'd: And can you think yourselves unworthy? Will you under that ungrateful Cover slight my *Love*?

Ah!

Ah! my Soul, give ear to this sweet *Call* of thy dear Redeemer; earnestly embrace this amorous *Invitation* of thy loving Jesus. 'Go and see how sweet is thy Lord, and how charming a Joy to those who *love* him: He is the *Beauty* of Angels, he is the *Felicity* of the Saints; he is *all Love*; in him are lock'd up all the Treasures of Nature, Grace and Glory. O Dear Jesus, I do attend to thy most loving *Invitation*; I will most thankfully accept of it; but what Return shall I make for so great a *Favour*? I have only my poor *Heart* to give thee; take it then, Dear Lord, and purify it with thy Love, that it may be eternally united to thee in this Sacrament of *Love*.

Examine yourselves, and receive your loving Jesus into your *Breasts*; but let it be with the profoundest *Humility*, with a *contrite Heart*, with an *inflamed Love*, and hearty *Thanksgiving* for so unspeakable a *Favour*: Give yourselves *entirely* to him, who has been so kind as to give his *whole Self* to you.

14th Day. *On frequent Communion.*

REFLECTION III.

WE cannot live without *corporal Food*; it is that which nourishes and maintains our Lives; we must take it *often*, or Nature will decay; so likewise must we the *Food* of our Souls, the *holy Sacrament*: It is our *daily Bread*

Bread; the Welfare of our Souls depends upon it; *Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye shall not have Life in you.* (John 6.) Let us therefore frequent it.

Did we reflect on the *Perverseness* of our Hearts, and the great Danger we are in of being overcome by Sin, we should be soon convinced of the Necessity of receiving this supporting Sacrament: Did we cast our Thoughts on our *Backwardness* in Virtue, and our little *Concern* for a happy Eternity, we should be soon made sensible of the need we have of this *quickening* Sacrament: Why then don't we receive it? Is once a Fortnight, three Weeks, or a Month, *too often*? The Saints did not think so. For shame, let not the primitive Christians, who communicated *every-day*, rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn our Neglect, our *ungrateful* Neglect.

Perhaps it is *Humility*, or our great *Unworthiness*, that keeps us at such a distance from our good God; we cannot pretend it, since Jesus Christ has called, has commanded, has *pressed* us to the *Banquet*; surely we don't think ourselves *unworthy* of being cured of our *Wounds*, of *entering* Heaven: Let us neither pretend a *Fear*, when our dearest Lord, with *stretch'd-forth Arms*, is ready to receive us; we have reason indeed to fear Hell, but not to be delivered from it.

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Examine yourselves, and let neither Slothfulness nor any Excuse put you off from frequenting the holy Sacrament. Every Month at least fail not to communicate: The eternal Welfare of your Souls, Love, Gratitude, and a thousand other Motives call you to it.

15th Day. On Preparation to Communion.

REFLECTION IV.

*W*HOM is it we receive in the holy Communion? It is an Almighty God, in whose Sight the Angels are not pure, in whose Presence the Pillars of Heaven tremble: Who are we that receive him? We are poor helpless Worms, by Sin worse than nothing: Why will this great God stoop so low? For no other reason than to heal our Souls. And can we think any pains too much, any time too long, to make the best Preparation for so noble a Guest? Suppose we had notice that our Prince intended to honour us with his Presence this very Night: What Preparations would there be; would not the House ring with the Report? Would not all unbecoming Rubbish be put out of the way? Should we not make use of the richest Furniture, and set every thing off to the best Advantage; and after all, think what we have done is not sufficient for so great a Guest? Why, the King of Heaven and Earth comes to take up his Lodging with us, and shall we give

give him but *cold Entertainment*? Where is the rich Furniture of Virtues? of Purity, Love, Gratitude, and Humility? Ah! my Soul, remember thou art upon a *great Work*; thou art preparing an *Habitation*, not for *Man*, but *God*. (Parl. 29.)

The most eminent *Saints* always used their *utmost Preparation*, as often as they went about to make their *Communion*; and dare we *Sinners* offer at it without a *serious Application* of our best *Endeavours*? Will a *Prayer* or two, run over in *Haste*, and without *Reflection*, do the *Work*? Alas! it is no wonder we receive so *little Benefit* by this *Sacrament*; it is well if we don't, by these *unwarrantable Doings*, eat and drink our *Damnation*.

Examine yourselves, and, by *Acts of Faith*, *Love*, *Sorrow* and *Humility*; by *Acts of Hope*, *Gratitude* and *Resignation*, *prepare* yourselves to receive your *Lord*: Cry aloud with the *Centurion*, (Mat. 8.) *Lord, I am not worthy that thou enter under my Roof; speak but the Word, and my Soul shall be healed:* Say with St. *Elizabeth*, *how comes it that the Son of God vouchsafes to visit me?* (Luke 1.)

16th Day. On an unworthy Communion.

REFLECTION V.

JUDAS committed a great Sin in betraying his *Master*; and he is damn'd for it: The *Jews* sinned grievously in crucifying their

their *Messias*; and in punishment thereof are forsaken, their Posterity destroyed, and the small Remainder of 'em become Vagabonds upon the Earth: And yet let me tell you, neither the *Treachery* of *Judas*, nor *Barbarity* of the *Jews* do far exceed the horrid *Sacrilege* of the *unworthy Communicant*. True it is, he that eats and drinks *unworthily*, eats and drinks *Damnation to himself*, not discerning the *Body of our Lord*. (1 Cor. 11.)

Unhappy Sinners! what are you doing? can you think of admitting the *Ark* and *Dagon*, God and the *Devil* into your Breasts together? Will you, by this *Sacrilege*, crucify again, as far as in you lies, your Blessed Lord? If *Oza* was struck dead for offering to touch the *Ark of God*; if *Belshazzar's* frightful Sentence was drawn upon his Palace for profaning the *Temple Vessels* consecrated to him; what ought you not to dread, when you *vilainously profane* the *Body and Blood of Christ*?

Dearest Saviour, why hast thou thus liberally given thyself to Man? Didst thou not foresee the horrid *Sacrileges* he would so often commit? Didst thou not foresee the *torturing Racks* he would put thee on, nor the *heavy Damnation* he would draw upon himself? Thou didst; but thy Design was *Love*; O! may I never be guilty of this *base Ingratitude*.

Examine yourselves, and before you offer to approach the *holy Sacrament*, purify your Hearts by a sincere Confession and Detestation of Sin; prepare yourselves by a lively Faith,

Faith, and other Christian Virtues: Ah! How pure (says St. Chrysostom) ought that Tongue to be, which is purpled with the dreadful Blood of Christ!

17th Day. On the Word of God.

REFLECTION I.

HE that is of God, hears the Word of God: (John 8.) A serious Desire of improving by the Word is a great Mark of Predestination. The Word eternal became incarnate to reconcile us to his Father, but by his temporal Word this Mercy was to be wrought: Without Faith there is no Salvation, and this the Word of God implants in our Hearts: Without the Help of Grace, we can't stir a Step towards Heaven; and this the Word of God infuses in our Souls: Thy Word, O Lord, is a Light to my Footing; (Psalm 118.) thy Word gives Understanding to little ones. Had not Magdalen heard the Words of Christ, she might have perished in her Sins; had not the Apostles by their zealous preaching propagated the Gospel, the World had remained buried in Infidelity.

Jesus Christ has a great Concern for us; he calls upon us by the Exhortations of his Ministers, by the pious Books he puts into our Hands, and shall we be deaf to his gracious Call? Nothing irritates him more than this wretched Insensibility of our own eternal Good.

Good. Mark his Comminations; (Prov. 2.)
Because I have called upon you, and ye have not
heard, I will also laugh, and insult in your
Destruction.

Divers have left the World, and shut themselves up in close Monasteries, touch'd with the powerful *Word* of God, while others have received no Benefit by it: What can be the reason of this Difference? Is not the *Seed* the same? Yes, but the *Soil* is not alike: The latter conceive no Affection for it, because their *Hearts* are become *rocky* by an Affection to Sin; or they are *overgrown* with the *Thorns* of worldly Sollicitude, and therefore bring forth no *Fruit*.

Examine yourselves, and cultivate your *Hearts* for a profitable Reception of the *Word* of God; lose not your Opportunities of improving by it: How many are unhappily deprived of these *Helps*, who, were they favour'd with them, would be *Saints*? Let them not rise in Judgment against you.

18th Day. On hearing the *Word* of God.

REFLECTION II.

HE that hears you, hears me. (Luke 10.) Were we convinced 'tis God speaks to us by the Mouth of his *Preacher*, we should undoubtedly be more attentive to him than we usually are: The *Words* of an Ambassador, delivered in the Name of the *Prince*, are as

as much regarded as if his Sovereign spoke in Person; and are not Preachers the Ambassadors of Jesus Christ? St. Paul says they are: (2 Cor. 5.) Why then don't we observe them?

It would be a Crime unpardonable for a Person to entertain himself with the Follies of a Footman, while his Prince was speaking to him; and are we less culpable, when our Thoughts are wilfully set upon frivolous, and perhaps sinful Objects, at that very time our Almighty God vouchsafes to teach us the Way to Heaven? Let us not thus comport ourselves; let us remember, that as often as the Preacher delivers his Word, our eternal Father cries aloud, as he did to the Disciples on Mount Thabor, *Hear ye him, it is my beloved Son that speaks.* (Luke 9.)

My Soul! be always devout to the Word of God, both when you read it, and when you hear it: Suffer not this precious Balm of Grace to fall unprofitably to the Ground: Imitate the Blessed Virgin, who carefully preserved in her heavenly Heart whatever she heard from and concerning her Son: Remember that our dear Lord regards the Prayers we make to him, in proportion to the Affection we bear to his Word in good Books or Sermons: Take care to purge thy Heart of all sinful, worldly and misplaced Affections; otherwise the Seed will be choaked, 'twill wither, or the Devil will come and take it from thee.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and see what Benefit
ye have made of the *Word of God*: *Hear it as*
often as ye can, and with a serious Attention:
Hear it with a firm Belief'tis God that speaks
to you: Hear it with a passionate Desire of
sinking into your Hearts, and of making it
the Rule of your daily Actions: Read it also
as often as possibly ye can; and whenever
ye take in hand a Spiritual Book, say to your
Hearts, Well, this I ought to consider now
as if it were a Letter brought me from Hea-
ven by my good Angel, to conduct me thither.

19th Day. *On keeping the Sunday.*

REFLECTION.

THE Institution of our *Lord's Day* is as ancient as the World: It was particularly established in the *Old Law*, and confirmed in the *New*: As we hope for Salvation, we are bound to keep it, and to keep it Holy; *Remember thou keep Holy the Sabbath Day.* (Exod. 20.) Is this observed by spending the greatest part of it in idle Entertainments, in unprofitable Visits, in committing fresh Sins, in profane Employments? No, and yet how many fall into these criminal Excesses! How many pervert this *Day* into a Day of Drunkenness, Debauchery and Gaming! Celebrating hereby not a Festival of God, but of the Devil. Deliver us, O Lord, from these too common Abuses.

O

The

The End of our Creation is to serve God; the Salvation of our Souls is our greatest Concern; and can it be too much, to set one Day in seven apart to serve this our merciful God, and to save our Souls? For shame! let not the transitory Things of this World thus take place of Heaven.

It is not enough to abstain from servile Work, to hear Mass, or assist at the public Service of the Church upon a Sunday; but we are to pour forth our Souls in devout Prayer, in Acts of Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving; in Acts of Love, Sorrow, and Humility; and to employ the greatest part of it in these pious Exercises: Because the end of it is to keep it Holy. We must read good Books, frequent the Sacraments, and endeavour to obtain such Supplies of Grace, as may be sufficient to support us all the Week following, when the Business of the World is apt to make us forget ourselves: By this religious Observance we shall not only celebrate a Festival on Earth, but with the Saints in Heaven.

Examine yourselves, and let a due Observance of Sundays and Holy Days be your particular Care: It will greatly conduce to your eternal Good: Do not impiously provoke God by Sin on these Days, in especial manner sacred to his Service: You adorn your Bodies, your Houses, your Altars on such Days; and will you neglect to beautify your Souls with Christian Virtues?

20th Day.

20th Day. *On Devotion.*

REFLECTION I.

THERE are many Christians who pretend to *Devotion*, when they have nothing of it: Some think themselves devout, because they are given to *Fasting*; tho' at the same time their *Hearts* are full of Malice: Others, because they huddle over a Multitude of *Prayers*, tho' they make no scruple of detracting or rashly judging their Neighbour: Others again believe themselves devout, because they are liberal in giving *Alms*; tho' they cannot find in their hearts to forgive their Enemies: Alas! such *false Devotion* will never save them.

True Devotion pushes us on vigorously and cheerfully to pursue *Virtue*. Nothing can come amiss to the devout Soul; she is like the Bee, which turns the bitterest Juice into the sweetest Honey. *Devotion* is the *Queen* of *Virtues*: If *Love* be a *Fire*, *Devotion* is its *Flame*: If *Love* be a *Plant*, *Devotion* is its *Flower*: If a rich *Balm*, *Devotion* is its *Smell*; which comforts Men, and rejoices Angels.

(*Intro. p. 1. c. 2.*)

Give me, O God, the Grace of *true Devotion*; I know that with it I shall receive the greatest Blessing upon Earth. Ah! the Fires, Racks, and Gridirons were *Perfumes* to thy Martyrs, because they were devout; it was *Devotion* changed the Mortifications of

thy Confessors into Beds of Roses: It removes Discontent from the Afflicted; it fills our Souls with an exceeding Delight. O grant me the Grace of true Devotion.

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain this rich Virtue, by withdrawing your Affections from a false World. Pretend no Excuse; for Devotion is suitable to all States and Callings. The Prince may be devout, St. Edward was so; the Soldier may be devout, St. Sebastian was so; the Shopkeeper may be devout, St. Joseph was so; Servants may be devout, Jacob was so; the House-keeper may be devout, St. Ann was so; the Widow may be devout, St. Monica was so; the Marry'd may be devout, Zachary and Elizabeth were both just. (Luke 1.)

21st Day. On Devotion to our Lady.

REFLECTION II.

NEVER any one, says St. Bernard, involved in his Necessities the Virgin Mary, that was not sensible of her Protection. She is a Mother to us, and therefore will help us: She is the Mother of Jesus; Jesus can deny his Mother Nothing. Her tender Breasts that gave him Suck, Floods of Tears she shed for him, the Grief which pierced her Heart on Mount Calvary, are so many Tongues that must incline him to Mercy.

O Mother

O Mother of Mercy, the Comforter of the Afflicted, the Refuge of Sinners, the Queen of Angels, hear our Prayers.

If the *Saints* in Heaven move God to pardon their humbled Clients, what cannot the *Queen* and *Mother* of the *Saints*, and *Mother* of *God*, do for us? Through her *Mediation* many abandon'd Sinners have obtain'd of *God* the Grace of Repentance, and become *Saints*. The sundry *Festivals* instituted in her Honour, the numerous *Churches* consecrated to her Memory, the *Confraternities* erected under her Invocation, are lasting Marks of her *Protection* over us.

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without offering up your Devotions to the *Blessed Virgin Mary*. Say her *Litanies*, *Office*, and *Rosary*, with a careful Attention: Have a particular Regard to her on her *Festivals*, keep her *Image* or *Picture* in your Chambers, and pay a suitable Respect to them. Chiefly labour to imitate her *Virtues*: She is a *Pattern* so universal, says St. *Ambrose*, that everybody may find a Lesson in her proper for himself. Shun all Sin; 'tis in vain to think of honouring the *Mother*, while you crucify the *Son*.

22d Day. On Devotion to the Saints.

REFLECTION III.

MOSES, by his Prayers, tied up the Hands of God from falling heavy upon the idolatrous *Israelites*: *Samuel*, by his Prayers defeated the *Philistines*: The Prayers of St. *Stephen* wrought the Conversion of his Murtherer *Saul*. If the Prayers of these *Saints*, and of infinite more, while here on Earth, were of such Force, can they possibly be less efficacious now they are reigning with Christ himself? What can be deny'd them, when they shall shew the *Wounds* they have bravely received for their Prince's Sake! No, their *Racks*, and other *Instruments of Torture* must necessarily move their *Lord* to Mercy. Let us implore their Patronage.

The Devils in Hell know our Works, and hear the Petitions of their impious Invokers; and can we believe the *Saints* in Heaven neither know our Wants, nor hear our Prayers? No doubt but that in God they see and hear us: *There shall be Joy in Heaven upon one Sinner doing Penance.* (Luke 15.)

O you common Protectors of Mankind, offer up your Prayers at the Throne of Mercy: We know, the Honours you are raised to are above all Expression: We know you are the familiar Friends of God, and that Thousands have escaped the Abyss of Hell through your Mediation: Visible Miracles have

have been wrought at your Shrines: Chase away from us the Shades of Darkness with your Beams of Glory; with compassionate Eyes behold our Misery; and since yourselves are in a State of Security, be *solicitous* for us.

Examine yourselves, and be punctual in your Devotions to the Saints in Heaven. Say their *Litanies* with a serious Attention, and strive to *imitate* their Virtues: 'Tis only then they think themselves honour'd, when they see you *humble* by their Example, *chaste* by their Example, *penitent* by their Example, *Self-deniers* by their Example, and animated to Virtue by their Example. Have a particular Devotion to your *Angel-Guardian*, and to your holy *Patrons*: They are in especial manner allotted you to guard your Souls.

23d Day. On Fervour in Devotion.

REFLECTION IV.

IT is not enough to serve God after any sort, it must be done with *Fervour*: This, Gratitude and our *Interests* oblige us to. What has not God done for us? He has *created* us to his Likeness, he has *redeemed* us with the Blood of his only Son, he *loves* us exceedingly, and shall we not make a grateful Return to the best of our Power? Nothing is hard to a Soul that *fervently* serves its God; his *Yoke* is *sweet*, and his *Burden* light (Mat. 11.)

to such a Heart. Who can be slack in his Christian Duties, when he considers that the Happiness, of Heaven will be proportion'd to the *Fervour* of his Devotion on Earth?

If our Services are to be measur'd by the *Master* we serve, how zealous ought ours to be, when they regard a God infinitely great? The *Courtier* eagerly sollicits his Prince; he studies his Inclinations to prevent his Commands; he readily and carefully executes his Orders; he sacrifices his Repose, his Pleasures, and his *All*, for his Prince's Sake; and shall we not as fervently serve our God! O God, it is *Thou* alone who truly deservest our most fervent Homages.

Christians, let us be fervent in our Devotions to God: Let us pray with *Fervour*; let us fast with *Fervour*; let every Action of our Lives speak a *Fervour*. Let us frequent the Sacraments, and fervently prepare ourselves for them: Let us attentively give ear to the Word of *God*: Let us strive against our Failings; let us improve in Virtue; let us separate ourselves from Creatures; let *God alone* be the Object of our Thoughts, the Center of our Hearts. Our Passions are so many Torrents, and it is *thus* we are to break the Force of them.

Examine yourselves, and be very fervent in these Duties: Remember that those who came last into the *Vineyard* were equally rewarded with the first Comers, because they were

were more fervent. Fervour is the Soul of Devotion. Follow then St. Paul's Advice; *Be fervent in Spirit, serving our Lord.* (Rom. 12.)

24th Day. *On Coldness in Devotion.*

R E F L E C T I O N V.

TIS a Sin to be *slack* in our Devotions to God, because we came into the World for no other Ends than to *love* and *serve* him: The same Reasons which oblige us to our Duty any one Day of our Lives, equally oblige us *every* Day. God was our Lord Yesterday; he is so To-day, and will always be so. Ah! did the *Love of God* inflame our Hearts, we should be more *vigorous* and *fervent* in his holy Service than we generally are: Did the *Holy Ghost* dwell within us, it were impossible our Souls should be so benumb'd; that *Divine Fire* would warm our Breasts.

The *older* we are, the *more* ought we in Gratitude to improve in Virtue, because the *Blessings* of God grow up with us. Out of how many Dangers has his Goodness deliver'd us! From what dreadful Precipices does he actually preserve us! How many Graces does he pour down upon us! Alas! we have no way left for answering these Blessings, but by our most *religious Homages*. Death is at our Gates; how shall we repent in that parting Moment, that we spent not

not our precious Time more carefully in preparing for it! Judgment draws on; what a Terror will it be to us, when we shall hear at the Bar of the Divine Justice that dreadful Sentence pronounced against us; *Cast the unprofitable Servant into utter Darkness!* (Mat. 25.) We are entring upon an *Eternity*; let us now, while Time is, prepare for a happy one. What would not the *Damn'd* in Hell give to be in our *Circumstances*! Would they be cold in their Devotions to God? Would they think any Pains too much to be employ'd in his Service? No, certainly.

Examine yourselves, and fix the like Sentiments in your Hearts. Shake off all Coldness in your Devotions to Almighty God; and remember, nothing provokes him more, than to fall off from your former Fervour. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after Justice:* (Mat. 5.) Daily renew your good Resolutions; say with David, *Lord, I have said now I have begun.* (Psalm 76.)

25th Day. On spiritual Dryness.

REFLECTION VI.

FAIR Weather does not always last; and therefore we must not wonder if sometimes our Souls be neither cherish'd with the *Warmth*, nor moisten'd with the *Dew* of Divine Comfort. Our Heavenly Father affords the *Milk* of his Consolations while our Stoicks

Stomachs are weak; he puts Honey into our Mouths to wean us from a bitter World, when we first list ourselves in his Service; but after we are grown strong, and are more advanced, then he feeds us with a course Diet; he leaves our Hearts, dry and barren, as if he had forsaken them.

O Lord, I see the Enemy of my Soul would fain persuade me that in these Occurrences thou dost cast me off, but I will not heed him. I do believe thou hast permitted this Dryness to befall me for my greater Good: That my past Sins and Neglects may here receive their due Punishment; that I may be truly humbled at the Sight of my Weakness; that I, Dust and Ashes, may never presume; and that I may more vigorously pursue the Course of Virtue.

My Soul, be not dejected at thy spiritual Dryness, since the greatest Saints have experienced it before thee, and for their greater Good: David was forced to struggle with his Heart all the Night long: *I was wearied, says he, with this Exercise, and I oblig'd my Spirit to think on God.* (Psalm 76.) Listen to St. Bernard; “*My Heart is dry, and like to Earth without Water; my Eyes will not afford one single Tear; our Lord visits all the Mountains round about me, and it is only me he comes not near.*” If then the greatest Saints have found this Barrenness, shalt thou, my Soul, be dismay'd at it?

Examine yourselves, and lose not Courage in these Trials. Quit not your usual Services, but

but vigorously force Nature to comply with Duty. “*Devotions perform’d in this Time of Dryness, are like dry Roses; which tho’ they look not so beautiful as fresh ones, yet have more Sweetness in the sight of God.*” (*Sales Intro.* p. 4. c. 14.) However, all spiritual Dryness is a Disorder which very much dulls the Soul: Strive therefore against it; and in your most resign’d Prayers beg to God that he would water your Souls with his Divine Grace.

26th Day. On Grace.

REFLECTION I.

WITHOUT the Grace of God we are worse than nothing; we are at the most but Dust and Corruption; we are ignorant, blind, ungrateful, miserable Sinners; we are lost for ever. What makes me differ from the blackest Criminal upon Earth? The Grace of God. What distinguishes my Soul from the foulest Soul in Hell? The Grace of God. If I stood firm when he unhappily fell; if I shall escape that dismal Abyss into which he has slid, is it not to be imputed to the Grace of God? Yes, ‘tis by the Grace of God I am what I am. (1 Cor. 15)

Without the Grace of God we can do nothing: Can we pray, fast, or meditate? No, not as we ought: We are not able to master our Passions; we cannot so much as have a good Thought, nor move a Step towards Heaven.

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What is more easy than to call upon the holy Name of *Jesus*? and this we can't do with any Profit to ourselves, without the Grace of God: How true is the Saying of our dearest Saviour, *Without me ye can do nothing!* (John 15.)

But by the *Grace of God* we are good Christians, and shall be glorious Saints. *I can do any thing*, says St. Paul, *thro' the Grace of him who is my Comforter.* (Phil. 4.) It is thus we become humble, chaste, patient, and wholly resign'd under the Appointments of Heaven. How many *Saints*, through the *Grace of God*, have left the *World*, and condemn'd themselves to a *Life of Penance*? How many *Martyrs* have been thus encourag'd to lay down their Lives for their Master's Sake?

Examine yourselves, and see if you have done your best for obtaining the *all-necessary Grace of God*: In the Spirit of Humility petition for it: *To the Humble only does he give his Grace.* (1 Peter 5.)

27th Day. *On a Corresponding with Grace.*

R E F L E C T I O N II.

GOD by his *Grace* calls upon us, and shall we be so insensible as to give no ear to him? *God* by his *Grace* dwells within our Breasts, and shall we insolently expel him this Habitation? What if he should be *silent* upon our not listning to his *Call*? Can any Threats

Threats be compared to this Silence? What if he shou'd withdraw himself upon our not receiving him, and leave us to ourselves? Can there be a greater Extremity of Misery? Speak, *O Lord, for thy Servant hears Thee.* (1 Kings 3.) Cease not to visit my helpless Soul; cease not by they Grace to be my Guide; lead where thou wilt, I am resolved to follow Thee.

Christians, let us not undervalue the Divine Grace; 'tis worth the Blood of a God: To resist it, is to be rebellious to the Light; 'tis a crying Sin against the Holy Ghost: In the Language of St. Paul, it is trampling under Foot the Blood of Christ more villainously than did the Jews on Mount Calvary, because we have no Ignorance to plead.

Grant, O God, that I may faithfully correspond with the Motions of thy Grace; grant that I may never be such an Enemy to myself as ungratefully to slight it: I know it to be the only Balsam capable of healing my wounded Soul: I know it is what draws me out of the Mire of Sin, and gives me a Title to the Bliss of Heaven. O let me not receive thy Grace in vain.

Examine yourselves, and see that in all Occurrences of Life you truly correspond with the Divine Grace. Follow its Motions wherever it leads you: Make the best use of what you have received, that so you may merit a continual Increase.

28th Day.

28th Day. *On the Abuse of Grace.*

REFLECTION III.

NOthing is more precious than *Grace*, and nothing more abused: All the Treasures of the World are but a Shadow to it. We abuse this *Grace*, when we stifle all Remorse, when we give no ear to the secret Reproaches of Conscience, when we learn not to be wise by the sad Experience of others. We abuse this *Grace*, when we shut our Eyes to the Inspirations of Heaven; when we neglect our Prayers, spiritual Reading, or the Sacraments; when we give little Attention to the Word of God, or the good Advice of Friends. Alas! how many Sins and criminal Neglects are the unhappy Issue of this *Abuse*!

Did we truly consider that every Action of our Lives is altogether fruitless without the *Grace* of God, we should not thus abuse it. Did we reflect on what it cost the Son of God; that it redeem'd the World and fills Heaven with Saints, we should not thus abuse it. Did we reflect how many Souls are miserably lost by neglecting this *Grace*, it were impossible we should imitate them. *Bethsaida* and *Corazin* shall be more terribly punish'd than *Tyre* and *Sidon*, because they received greater *Graces*, and answer'd them not.

Christians, let us not make void the *Grace* of God: How many Thousands would long since have done rigorous Penance in Sack-cloth and Ashes,

Ashes, had they received the Succours that we have done. Who knows but that in vengeance of past Abuses we may be bereaved of Grace when we have the greatest need of it! Let us dread our approaching Judgment; the very Heathens shall condemn us at the Bar, and upbraid us with our Abuse of Grace.

Examine yourselves, and make a speedy Redress for whatever *Abuses* you stand guilty of. Give ear to St. Paul: *Brethren, I exhort you not to receive the Grace of God in vain.* (2 Cor. 6.) Had not this Saint duly comply'd with the *Inspirations* of Grace, he had never been an *Apostle*. Had not St. Augustine follow'd its *Suggestions*, he had lost his Crown.

29th Day. On the Uncertainty of Grace.

REFLECTION IV.

NO Man living can absolutely say he is in the State of Grace. *Man knows not if he be worthy of Love or Hatred.* (Eccl. 9.) How ought we to be terrify'd at the Thoughts of this Truth, when it has caused even the greatest *Saints* to tremble? *I am thunder-struck,* says St. Bernard, when I read these Words, *Man knows not if he be worthy of Love or Hatred.*

St. Paul was privileg'd with extraordinary *Graces*; he was rapt in Spirit to the third Heaven, and heard those Secrets which will never be in the Power of Man to utter: And after all what does he say of himself? *Tho' my*

Conscience

Conscience accuses me not, yet I dare not say in this I am justify'd; (1 Cor. 4.) for I have a great God to judge my Works, a God who will reveal the hidden Secrets of my Heart. If this Apostle had so surprising an Apprehension of his Uncertainty in Grace, are not we awaken'd, who have all of us great reason to suspect a Want of it?

Suppose we avoid grosser Sins; may it not many times be looked upon as the effect of Nature? Suppose we take not up the sinful Practices of the World, but condemn them from our Hearts; may it not be oftentimes the Result of Constitution? Suppose we are exactly just in our Dealings; may it not be frequently imputed to a natural Honeſty? And where is Grace all this while? Do not our frequent Relapses into Sin, and the little Amendment of our Lives, shew we want it? Alas! did we take an impartial View of our best and daily Actions, how great a Defect of Intention should we meet with! How ſeldom should we find they are purely level'd at the Honour of God! Can we therefore tell whether we are worthy of Love or Hatred?

Examine yourselves, and be humbled at the Thoughts of your incertain State. Let a ſaving Fear ever keep you upon your guard; It is by Fear and Trembling you are to work out your Salvation. (Philip. 2.) Beg pardon for your past Offences; A contrite and humble Heart God will not despise. (Pſalm 50.)

P 30th Day.

30th Day. On choosing a State of Life.

REFLECTION I.

THE World is the *House* of God, and those who live in it make up his *Family*: His Eternal Wisdom has divided his *Offices*, some to one, and some to another; and to every one he has given Strength and Parts in proportion to the Duties he has appointed for them. How great reason have we to abandon ourselves to the wise Conduct of so good a *Master*! We must needs be safe; we can never perish under his Protection. Let us therefore, in our *Choice of Life*, follow the unerring Call of Heaven.

Since all *States* are not good for every-body, how ought we to fear least we *choose*, or have *chosen*, that which is not good for us? Upon an ill *Choice* there must necessarily follow an endless Misery, both in this World and in the next; and yet how many blindly and rashly make it! How many embrace a *State of Life* for carnal Ends, without ever consulting the Will of God! Can these expect a Blessing from him? No wonder their Hearts are perpetually gnaw'd with Discontents and Vexations; no wonder their Souls are cover'd with Iniquity, and nothing but Unhappiness entail'd upon them. Christians, is it not our Case?

*Except, O Lord, thou dost build the House,
they labour in vain who pretended to build it.*

(Psalm

(Psalm 126.) I know I shall be miserable, without the Grace of a *Call* from thee; Grant it therefore, I beseech thee; and let my Life answer it in every Particular: But because, O God, I am already engag'd in a *State of Life*, pardon my neglects in the *chusing* of it; pardon the vain Motives of unthinking Youth, and teach me now to do thy *Will*. (Psalm 142.)

Examine yourselves, and seriously deliberate on a *State of Life*, if you have not yet chosen one. Remember it is the most critical Task of your Lives, seeing all depends on't. Prepare yourselves for it by a virtuous Youth: It is thus you will merit the Light of Heaven. If you are *already* engag'd; daily beg of God his enabling Grace, to the end you may well discharge the necessary Duties of your *respective Callings*.

31st Day. On the Rules of chusing a State of Life.

REFLECTION II.

THIS to be feared there are Multitudes of Christians in the World, who *raſhly* embrace a *State of Life* out of mere Fancy, or some sudden Passion; without ever examining whether they are *qualify'd* for it, or it be the *Call of Heaven*. I fear there are many too, who propose to themselves Pleasure, Riches, Preferment, Reputation, and such worldly Ends, without ever consulting the *Will of God*,

or their Eternal Concerns. Unhappy Souls! they have left the right Path, (Prov. 2.) and no wonder they walk in the ways of Darkness: What can they expect more than an Egyptian Slavery with the fugitive Israelites. Let us avoid their Misery.

In order to chuse well a State of Life, we are to do three Things: First, we must consult God, ourselves, and our Director. God is our Lord, and we live for him, and therefore we are to chuse nothing without his Direction. This Grace we must humbly beg in our most fervent Prayers, crying aloud with the good King David: *O Lord, enlighten the Darkness of my Soul:* (Psalm 17.) Or with the Convert St. Paul: *Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* (Acts 9.) Secondly, we must consult our own Hearts, by searching narrowly into the Dispositions of them; by examining our Inclinations, and whether we are truly qualify'd for such or such a State. Lastly, we are to ask Advice of our Confessor: It is he whom God has ordain'd to watch over our Souls; it is he can best help us in this important Affair: Saul was to learn of Ananias the Will of Heaven.

O Father of Lights, do thou chiefly direct us in this difficult Task: *Make thy Ways known to me wherein I may walk.* (Psalm 142.) I see all depends upon a right Choice; with it I am happy, and without it miserable. Speak, O Lord, for thy Servant bearsthee. (1 Kings 3.)

Examine

Examine yourselves, and as you hope to embrace a happy State of Life, practise the Rules you have here before you. Take care you engage not in a sinful State; nor in such as is likely to be pernicious to your dear Souls. Never chuse a Life you are not qualify'd for. Trust not too much to your own Judgment. (Prov. 3.) With an humble Perseverance crave of God his enlightning Grace, without which you will certainly miscarry.

Practical Reflections FOR MAY and NOVEMBER.

First DAY.

On an Ecclesiastical State.

REFLECTION I.

THREE is no State in the World so honourable as is that of *Church-Men*.

They are establish'd Mediators on Earth betwixt God and Man: Their Functions surpass even those of Angels: To their Trust is committed all that is precious or dear in Heaven; viz. The Ministry of God's Word, the Administration of his Sacraments,

the Government of his Church, and the Care of Souls which he has redeem'd with his Blood. O God, what an Honour is this ! that the Treasures of Heaven should be committed to Men ; that the Angels should behold them with Respect and Veneration !

Let all, who aspire to this great Dignity, be fill'd with Terror at the Thoughts of the Obligations they take upon them. Ah ! how ought they to *shine forth* to the World by their exemplary Sanctity ! God will be sanctify'd in those who approach him. (Levit. 10.) Let them remember they are *Servants of the Faithful*, (2 Cor. 4.) and are to sweat and labour in the Vineyard of the Lord. What a Confusion will it be to many *Ecclesiastics*, when they shall hear the Lamentations of poor Souls pour'd out against them at the Bar of Divine Justice, for having been *blind Guides*, *careless Instructors*, *faithless Mediators*? For having led them into a Precipice by their *dis-edifying Example*, instead of conducting them to a Life of Glory ? What can they say ?

O God, let me not take this *Charge* upon myself, unless call'd by Thee, as was thy Servant Aaron : Let not Pleasure, Ease, or worldly Wealth push me upon it. O fit me for it by a Life of *Virtue*, *Zeal*, and *Learning*; otherwise I shall draw upon myself a heavy curse and an Eternal Misery. Let not *Custom* or a depraved World influence my Actions, but let them all be level'd at thy *Glory*.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and if you desire to embrace an Ecclesiastical State, prepare yourselves for it by a holy Life : *Woe be to him, says St. Jerome, that comes to the Supper without a Nuptial Garment.* Prepare yourselves likewise by a studious Life ; 'tis unknown what Mischiefs follow from the Ignorance of Church-Men : Alas ! how many perish upon that account ! Do nothing without Advice. Give ear again to St. Jerome : *Great is the Dignity of Priests, and great the Fault of those that sin.*

2d Day. On a Marry'd Life.

REFLECTION II.

THE State of *Marriage* is a *Holy State*, because God is the Author of it. He sanctify'd it in the Beginning of the World in the Person of *Eve* : Christ sanctify'd it by his Birth, in being born of a Marry'd Woman : He sanctify'd it with his Presence, Blessing, and a Miracle, at the Wedding in Galilee. O God, I do believe it to be a great Sacrament ; (*Ephes. 5.*) I believe it affords new Graces to those who worthily receive it ; and it signifies the blessed Union of Christ thy Son with his dear *Church*.

Many are the *Obligations* of Marry'd Persons. Their principal Duty is to fear God, and keep his Commandments ; so, as to be in a Readiness of abandoning Wife, Children,

and all that's dear to 'em, rather than offend God by Sin. Next to God, they are to establish in their Hearts a *mutual Love* for one another, a *lasting Fidelity*, and to bear with the utmost Patience each other's Failings. *Lastly*, they are to provide for the Necessities of their Children : Due Instruction, reasonable Correction, and good Example, are *Duties* which cannot possibly be dispensed with.

Do all comply with these *pressing Obligations*? Are there none so *blinded* with carnal Love, as to have *little Regard* for the Love of God? Are there none who *differ* among themselves? who are *false* to one another, and are led away with Jealousies, Hatred and Revenge? Are there none that *neglect* the Education of their Children, and ruin their Souls by an irregular Love and criminal Fondness? Are there none that *beggar* them by their excessive Extravagances? Alas! 'tis to be fear'd the Number of such is exceeding great.

Examine yourselves, and in order to succeed well in a *Marry'd Life*, earnestly beg of God to *direct* you in it: It is his *Gift*, and you must endeavour to merit it by a Life of Virtue. Consult your Parents, Friends, and Director, before you engage. Let not any *criminal Considerations*, but a *good Intention* be your Motive for embracing it. Marry not your *Kindred* within the Degrees forbidden, without

out very great Reasons. Marry not those who are out of the Communion of the Church. Engage with such only as are suitable to your Condition. Take care you marry not in the State of *mortal Sin*; lest by losing the Benefit of that holy *Sacrament*, you deprive yourselves of the Blessings so absolutely necessary for that State of Life.

3d Day. On Virginity.

REFLECTION III.

THO' the State of Marriage be honourable in all, yet the State of *Virginity* much excels it. *He that gives his Virgin in Marriage does well, but he that gives her not does better.* (1 Cor. 7.) *Christian Virgins* are the most illustrious Part of Christ's Flock; they are the fairest Flower in the Garden of the Church: They are *Angels* upon Earth: They have *nothing* to divide their Hearts from God: They are only *solicitous* for heavenly Things: *They follow the Lamb wherever he goes.* (Revel. 14.)

Happy are they who make *Religious Houses* the Inclosure of their Virginity; here safe from the Waves of a stormy World, they adore their God in Spirit and Truth. Here they breathe the sweet Air of Virtue. Here they are swallow'd up in Divine Love, anticipating the immortal Joys of Heaven.

How

How do we envy your Happiness, O *chaste*
Spouses of Jesus Christ! *Blessed are the un-*
defil'd in the way, who walk in the Law of the
Lord. (Psalm 118.)

My Soul, since thou hast embraced a *Vir-*
gin Life, take care that *Pride* never sully it:
 Let thy *Purity* be accompany'd with *Humili-*
ty of Heart: It will avail thee nothing to
 live *single*, if thou art once puffed up with
 the *Sin of Devils*. Often seek some *Retire-*
ment from the *Noise of the World*, where
 thou may'st think and speak of none but
 God; where, unmolested, thou may'st pour
 forth thy Soul in *fervent Prayer*. Join to
 thy *Virginity* a *Life of Penance*, in order to
 perfect the *Sacrifice* thou hast made of thyself.

Examine yourselves, and in case you are
 already engag'd in a *Life of Virginity*, let this
 be your constant Practice. If you are only
 aspiring thereto, take care you do nothing
 rashly in it. Consult before-hand some ju-
 dicious Friend. Advise with your own
 Hearts, and see what *Motive* induces you to
 embrace it. Imitate the prudent *Builder*,
 who offers not to lay the Foundation of his
 Work, till he finds himself able to carry it
 on and finish it.

4th Day. On Suffering.

REFLECTION I.

WE are *Men*, and not *Angels*: There is no going to Heaven but by the *Way* of the *Cross*: We must *fight* and *conquer* before we shall be crown'd: We cannot think of *reigning* with Christ and not *suffer* with him: No, we must *suffer* from *Above* by *Sicknesses* and *Chastisements*; we must *suffer* from the *World* in *Estate* and *good Name*; we must *suffer* from the *Devil* by his restless *Artifices*.

Our dearest *Lord* was hated by the *World*, his *Life* was a *T torment*, his *Death* most *oruel*; and would we live in *Pleasure* and *Delights*? Does nothing please but *Ease* and *Softnes*? Are we *impatient* under *Afflictions*? Do we dread the *Thoughts* of 'em? This is not to be a *Christian*. O *Jesus*, be thou my *Comfort*, and let the *World* *afflict* me; let my *Life* *decay* with *Sorrow*, and my *Years* *consume* in *Groans*; let *Rottenness* enter my *Bones*, and *swarm* under me, provided I find Rest at the last Day.

Christians! wonder not at your *Sufferings*, for God *chastises* every *Child* he loves: (Heb. 12.) He *chastises* us, to wean us from a *false* *World*; by *Chastisements* he furnishes us with *Opportunities* of *heaping up* eternal *Treasures*, of augmenting our *Happiness*, of meriting each Moment *new Degrees* of *Glory*: Are not these

these the greatest Mercies? Yes, *Blessed are they that suffer:* (Mat. 5.) But it must be with *Patience*, and an *humble Submission* to the Will of Providence: Thus *Christ* suffer'd, and thus the *Saints*.

Examine yourselves, and be not *impatient* under any Misfortune that shall befall you: *Grumble not at Providence*, but receive your *Sufferings* as the *Effects of Mercy*: What are your *Afflictions* to the *Racks of Martyrs*? *Heaven* is your Concern, and it is *through many Tribulations* (Acts 14.) you are to enter it.

5th Day. On the Advantages of Suffering.

REFLECTION II.

SUPPOSE I am a *Sufferer*; I am still resolved not to sink under the Burthen, since no Misfortune can befall me but by the Divine Appointment: I am a *Christian*, and therefore do I purpose to *conform my Will* to the *Will of God*, who knows what is best for me, and by a thousand ways contrives my *Happiness*, when I little think of it. This shall always be my Prayer; *O Lord, thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.* (Mat. 6.)

We generally fancy ourselves most happy, when Prosperity smiles on us, tho' at that very time we have reason to apprehend the severer Judgments: Did not the *Israelites* forget themselves and God too, when the World seem'd to go well with them? And were they

not

not recalled by seasonable Chastisements? Was it not under these Scourges they humbled themselves, and timely repented for their crying Sins? How many Sinners with the Prodigal Son have been reclaimed by Suffering! How many are now great Saints in Heaven upon this account! And why are we impatient?

Did we not suffer, where would be our Humility, Patience and Faith? How should we satisfy for former Sins? Is it not better to suffer a little here than eternally hereafter? I am sure the Damn'd think so, and repent the Day in which they were not forewarn'd by temporal Chastisements: Were they permitted to return to Life, ah! how would they pray; *here burn, here cut, spare us not, O Lord, provided thou dost for ever spare us!* (St. Augustin.) Let their Misfortune be our Instruction.

Examine yourselves, and see how you have improved by your daily Sufferings: Remember they are the Portion of the Predestinate: Let an humble Resignation under all Trials compose your Thoughts: Bless your good God, who has given you Opportunities of atoning for past Ingratitudes, and of purchasing, by light and momentary Tribulations, an eternal Weight of Glory. (2 Cor. 4.)

6th Day. On *Acts of Patience.*

REFLECTION III.

O Lord, thy Will be done: I receive my Sufferings as coming from the Hands of a loving God: I heartily embrace them; and in all Humility do kiss the happily chastising Rod: I behold it as a Mark of thy greatest Goodness in afflicting me here, to spare me eternally. Sweetest Jesus, wilt thou make me a Partaker in thy Sufferings? Shall I wear thy thorny Crown, and bear thy Cross? Shall I consummate in myself the Work thou hast begun? Shall I die with thee? Ah! it is too great a Mercy.

My Soul, there is no Heaven for thee, if thou dost not suffer: Thou hast been a Sinner; think it not then much to satisfy the Divine Justice, when it softly calls upon thee: Chuse rather to be afflicted on Earth, than with the Devils in Hell. Alas! thou dost not resist to Blood; thy Sufferings are but small: Thy Heart has been criminally set on the World, and is it a Severity to be wean'd from it? No, let our mortal Enemies vent their Malice, let them strip us naked of all that's dear, and cover us, like Job, with an universal Ulcer; let them persecute us barbarously as the Jews did Christ; by the Help of God, we will still rejoice that we are worthy to suffer for our Master's Sake: Did not the Apostles do so? Did not all the Saints?

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But, O Lord, it is thy Grace must enable our weak Endeavours; grant us therefore Patience, we humbly crave it: O blessed Virgin, whose Heart was pierced with the Sword of Grief, come to our Assistance: Great Saints, who have all walked in the royal Way of the Cross, intercede for us.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly beg for the Spirit of Patience: In all your Calamities, Look on the Face of your suffering Christ: (Psalm 83.) Remember Patience is necessary for you; (Heb. 10.) and that in your Patience you are to possess your Souls. (Luke 21.)

7th Day. On Voluntary Suffering.

REFLECTION IV.

If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9.) They that are Christ's have crucify'd their Flesh with its Passions and Lusts. (Gal. 5.) If you live according to the Flesh, you shall die; but if through the Spirit you mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, you shall live. (Rom. 8.) Are not these Texts so many concurring Testimonies of the Necessity of Mortification?

We are Christians, and as such ought to imitate our Saviour Christ; and was not his Life a Life of Self-denial? Don't those solemn Renunciations, we made at Baptism, engage us to live in a perpetual Mortification,

by

by renouncing the *World* with its Pomps, the *Devil* and his *Works*, the *Flesh* and its *Pleasures*? And have we done so? We cannot be saved without the *Grace* of a *suffering Lord*; it takes its Force from his *gaping Wounds*; 'tis the Price of his most *precious Blood*, and therefore not applicable to a *sen-fual Heart*: No, we are all Children of Mount *Calvary*; and as *Christ* died to save us, so we must die to save ourselves.

What is Mortification? 'Tis a *Sacrifice of Love*: The *Holy Ghost* is the *Priest*, our *Bodies* the *Victim*, our *Hearts* the *Altar*, Love the *Fire*, and Glory its *Reward*: *What is Mortification?* It is a *Martyrdom of Love*; a Continuation of the Sufferings of *Jesus Christ*: Ah! that we did truly suffer with *Jesus*, and die with him! *A nice and indulg'd Body is very unbecoming a thorny Head.* (St. Bern.)

Examine yourselves, and resolve to practise this *voluntary Suffering*, which makes the Character of a Christian: Bridle all Concubiscence, check your Passions, tame your rebellious Flesh, die to yourselves, that you may live to God: Can you say with St. Paul? *With Christ I am nail'd to the Cross.* (Gal. 2.)

8th Day.

8th Day, *On a Christian Conformity to
the Will of God.*

REFLECTION I.

THE Will of God is an Almighty Will; he does whatever he *wills*, and does nothing but what he *wills*; not a Hair falls from our Heads, or a Leaf from the Trees, but by his Divine Ordinance: The Will of God is infinitely *wise*; whatever he ordains is always for the best: *O Lord, thou hast done all Things in thy Wisdom:* (Psalms 103.) The Will of God is infinitely *good*, and good to us; whatever he does is for our Benefit: His Love for us guides his Heart, and guides his Hand. Can a Christian Soul have greater Encouragement? Let us *conform* ourselves to this all-powerful, wise, and good Will of God: Let us rely on his Power, and we shall never despair; let us submit to his Wisdom, and we shall never err; let us be resign'd to his Goodness, and we shall be always happy.

Why are we so *disturb'd* at small Disappointments? Why do we grumble and fret under Afflictions? Will this lessen them; Why are we so *impatient* at every thing that thwarts us? when nothing of this Nature happens, but what is the *Effect* or *Permission* of an unerring Providence: Is it not our daily Prayer? *O Lord, thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven;* (Mat. 6.) let us seriously reflect on it.

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Almighty

Almighty God is a most tender Father; he regards us as the Objects of his greatest Care: If he chastises us with Afflictions, 'tis to heal our Wounds; if he separates us from Creatures, 'tis to unite us to himself; if he deprives us of temporal Goods, it is to give us eternal ones; why then are we not resign'd to his blessed *Will*? O God, I desire thy *holy Will* may be accomplish'd in me.

Examine yourselves, and be sure to put in practice this necessary Lesson of *conforming your Wills* to the *Will* of God: It is the greatest Perfection you can arrive to in this Life, and a certain Sign of your future Happiness. In all Adversities let this be your Prayer; *O Lord, thy Will be done;* visit me as thou pleasest, thy *Will* is mine, I joyfully kiss the chastising Rod.

9th Day. On conforming ourselves to the Will of God.

REFLECTION II.

THE Perfection of a Christian consists in doing the *Will* of God, and in submitting to it: We do the *Will* of God, when we keep his Commandments; we submit to it, when we resignedly receive whatever he sends us, Good or Evil; let us therefore conform ourselves, since all *Perfection* is founded on the Practice. We cannot want Encouragement, if we look on the Example of *Jesus Christ*;

Christ; his whole Life was a *perpetual Submission* to his Father's *Will*; there is nothing Nature abhors more than a Separation of Body and Soul; and yet in his *bloody Agony* hear how he prays, *Father, not my Will, but thine be done.* (Mat. 26.)

Nothing can come amiss to that Christian; who embraces this *Conformity*: Is he visited with Sickness? He *gladly* receives it, because his *Will* is what God shall send him. Is he persecuted in Religion or Estate? He bears it with *Patience*, because the *Will of God* is *his*. Has cruel Death rob'd him of his Friends, or of what's most dear to him? He cries out with *Job*, *Let the Name of our Lord be for ever blessed.* (Job 1.) Are his Thoughts afflited at the general Wickedness of the World? He *humblly* acquiesces to the *Will of God*. Is he distracted in his Prayers? cold in Devotion? Tho' they are Troubles, he receives 'em with *Submission*. Is he molested with impetuous Temptations? *O Lord, thy Will be done*, is his constant Prayer.

O God, give us the Grace of *conforming* ourselves to thy holy Will; we know it affords us a Heaven upon Earth; nothing is hard to us, nothing sorrowful: Are not thy Saints and Angels happy, in having no other Will than *thine*? Does not this fill their Souls with Divine Joy? Is it not thus they are transported with *Love*? with those *Flames of Love*, which will never be conceived by the Heart of Man?

Examine yourselves, and see if the daily Actions of your Lives speak this *Conformity*: Earnestly sue for this blessed Gift, by renouncing *Self-will*, which is incompatible with the *Will of God*.

10th Day. *On the Example of Christ.*

REFLECTION I.

CHrist has suffered for you, says St. Peter, leaving you an Example that ye tread his Steps. (1 Pet. 2.) We are willing to follow the Example of a good Friend, nothing hinders us; let our Prince set the most difficult Example, let him hazard his Life in the furious Heat of Battle, we are prepar'd to die with him: Christ is our Friend, he is our best Friend, and are we as ready to follow him? He is our King, no earthly King can compare to him, and are we ambitious of serving him? It would be a happy Ambition indeed!

Jesus Christ has ransom'd our Souls with the Price of his Blood: By dying for us, he has raised us to the highest Degree of Honour; he has given us a Right to the Kingdom of Heaven; and are we dispos'd to follow his Example to the Effusion of our Blood? He desires no more, than that having given us entirely his most loving Heart, we reciprocally on our parts return him ours.

Christ has humbled himself, that we Christians might do the same at the sight of our

Offences.

Offences: He meekly bore with the Insults of the Jews for our Example: He cur'd the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind, to stamp on our Hearts fraternal Charity: He led a poor and obscure Life, to recommend to us a Poverty of Spirit, and to fly Vain-glory: He drank of the bitter Cup of Affliction, to engage us to submit to those Scourges the Divine Justice shall lay upon us: And after all shall we do nothing for ourselves? Ah! that these were the true Sentiments of our Hearts, *Master, I'll follow thee wherever thou goest.* (Mat. 8.)

Examine yourselves, and if you really desire to crush sinful Pride, to disengage your Hearts from brutal Pleasures, or to wean your Affections from a vain World, be sure to meditate often on the Life of Christ. By a diligent turning of our Eyes on our Divine Master, we shall most effectually surmount the Attempts of our Enemies, and come at length, to our unspeakable Comfort, *to form him in us.* (Gal. 4.)

11th Day. On the Imitation of Christ.

REFLECTION II.

I Am the Light of the World; he that follows me walks not in Darkness. (John 8.) Had we a true Sense of Jesus Christ; did we love him with all our Hearts; it would be natural to us to copy his Example: One of the most sensible

sensible Arguments of our *Love* is the *passionate Desire* we have of being *united* to the Person whom we love; and this *Union* is effected by a like Resemblance of Heart: How unspeakable a Happiness must it be, to have our Hearts *united* to the Heart of *Jesus*; to have our Hearts burning with the Love of *Jesus*; to have them *inflam'd* with his Zeal for Souls, embellish'd with his Innocence, *embolden'd* by his Patience to suffer any Persecution!

Children naturally imitate their Parents, and one Friend another; *Jesus Christ* is a *loving Father* to us, he is a *true Friend*, and are we not stir'd up to an *Imitation* of him? Our eternal Interest depends upon it, and will not *this* move us?

What's more *honourable* than to tread the Steps of a *Man-God*? What more *noble*, than to fight and conquer with him? Our blessed Lord exacts nothing from us, but what *himself* has done: If he invites us to carry our Cross, he has done it to the utmost Rigour: If he exhorts us to use Violence to our Passions, he has already practised it: If he obliges us to pardon Injuries, wonder not, it was his expiring Breath upon the Cross; *Father, forgive them.* (Luke 23.)

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to transcribe the *Virtues* of your *Original* into the *Copy* of your Lives. Let the *Example* of *Christ* be the *Rule* of your Actions, let it be

be the Object of your Thoughts; in your Studies, at your Work, when you awake, before you sleep; at all times, and in all Occurrences of Life, think on Jesus.

12th Day. *On the Conformity of a Christian to the Life of Christ.*

REFLECTION III.

I Have given you an Example, that as I have done, so you do likewise. (John 13.) 'Tis what Christ speaks to every one of us. To be a Christian, is to conform to Jesus Christ; to deviate from him, is to be in effect a Heathen: *I am in vain a Christian,* says St. Bernard, *if I follow not Christ.*

Jesus Christ has taught, that the brightest Glory is founded upon *Humility*; that the Happiness of a Christian is to be sought amidst *Sufferings*; the most weighty Riches in a true *Poverty of Spirit*: He has told us we must renounce ourselves, that we must *check* our Inclinations: Let us sound our Hearts; are these our Sentiments? If not, there's no pretending a *Conformity* to the Life of Christ.

Jesus Christ lov'd to suffer; he lov'd *Humiliations*; he lov'd them, because they were the only means for propagating the *Glory* of his heavenly Father, and the *Salvation* of Mankind: Do we partake of the like Affections? Do we resignedly submit to the Divine Appointments? are we ready to engage in

what concerns the Honour of God, or our Neighbour's Good? This it is to conform to Christ.

The End of Christ's Actions was the Glory of his Father: His curing the Lame, the Deaf, the Blind; his preaching, exhorting, and converting Souls; his eating, sleeping, and whatever he did, was always refer'd to the Glory of his Father: Is the Honour of God the End of our Performances? It must be so, if we think of conforming to the Life of Christ. There is no Action of Life, even the most indifferent, but what may be sanctify'd by a Christian Intention.

Examine yourselves, and conclude with this humble Confession of your past Miscarriages. Most merciful Saviour, I acknowledge thy Goodness in making me a Christian, and am confounded that I have so little comply'd with the Character. I crave the Grace of a hearty Repentance, and that thou would'st enable me for the future to conform my Life to thy unblemish'd Original.

13th Day. *On the Love of Christ.*

REFLECTION IV.

TH E Measure of *Love* is to love without Measure; such was the *Love Jesus Christ bore us*. He lov'd us more than we love ourselves; he lov'd us more than the Blessed in Heaven can love him, tho' they are swallow'd up

up in *Love*. He prefer'd the *Love of us* to the Riches of his *Glory*; he left them to redeem us; he prefer'd the *Love of us* to his own dear *Life*; he dy'd to save us: Ah! let us never be so very *ungrateful* as not to return *Love for Love*.

We love our temporizing Friends, and shall we not *love* the best of Friends, *Jesus Christ*? 'Tis true, he invites us with Promises, he presses us with Blessings, he solicits by Inspirations, he obliges us by Threats to give him our *Hearts*, but for no other End than for our own *Sakes*: Little Advantage will accrue to him by a Return of our *Love*: When we have done our utmost, we are still *unprofitable Servants*. (Luke 17.) Christians, *Christ* has *lov'd* us to an *infinite Degree*; he *lov'd* us when we knew him not; he *lov'd* us when, in the *Jews*, we conspir'd his Death; and tho' perhaps at this very time by repeated Crimes we *crucify him again*, he *loves us still*; and because he is forc'd to use a *Charm* to soften our stony *Hearts*, see, he composes a *Love Potion*, he gives us his *Body* and *Blood* for our Food: O how unspeakable is the *Love my Jesus bears me!*

My Soul!, should thy *Saviour* put the Question to thee as he did to St. *Peter*; *Peter, dost thou love me?* couldst thou safely answer, *O Lord, thou knowest that I do love thee?* (John 21.) Would not the little Scruple thou makest of offending him, thy Backwardness

wardness in Virtue, thy Ingratitude, and Insensibility, in regard to past Favours, belye thy Words?

Examine yourselves, and see if you have not been cold in the Love of Jesus. Rectify past Omissions; and let your Prayer be that of St. Augustin; *O Lord, I know thou dost command me to love thee; give me necessary Grace to fulfil thy Commands, and command what thou wilt.*

14th Day. On a Confidence in Christ.

REFLECTION V.

THO' Sin be in a manner infinite, inasmuch as it attacks an infinite Majesty; yet notwithstanding its Malice, Christ by his Death has made a superabounding Satisfaction for all the most crying Sins of Mankind. He could have aton'd for them with the least Motion of his Heart, but it was his Will to suffer; the least Pain would do it, but he must shed his Blood; and not a Drop only, which would abundantly suffice, but he was resolv'd to shed even the last Drop of it. O how great a subject of Confidence must it be to a Christian Heart, to see such an Overflow of Merits purchas'd by the Sufferings of his dying Lord!

But for whom did Christ die? For us Sinners: And as in Quality of our Head he shar'd our Misery, so in regard we are his

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Members, he has communicated to us the Treasures of his Grace. What Motives of Confidence ! Who now can despair, when he considers his God has satisfy'd for his Sins by dying for him ? Yes, Christians, the Ransom is paid ; we have a plentiful Redemption : It only remains that we seriously endeavour to apply the Merits of our Redemption to our helpless Soul ; for without this Application, we are still lost.

We will then confide in the Merits of our Saviour : Let the Devil beset us with the *worst* of his Temptations ; let him strive to oppress us with Sadness of Mind, or bodily Afflictions ; we need never fear him, provided we seek Refuge in the *Wounds* of Jesus, or shelter ourselves within his *Heart*, so often pierc'd with the *Love* of us. *Great is my Injustice*, says the pious St. *Augustin*, but much greater is the *Justice* of my *Redeemer*.

Examine yourselves, and ever confide in the Merits of your *Redeemer* : Let it be a *Motive* to you in order to bear up under the sharpest Trials. In the time of Temptation say from your Hearts, *In thee, O Lord, I have hop'd, let me not be confounded for ever.* (*Psalm 30.*)

15th Day. On the Price of a Soul.

REFLECTION I.

Could we see the *true Value* of a *Soul*, it were impossible we should so *cheaply* expose it to *Ruin* : Only the *God* that makes it knows

knows its Worth. It is the *Masterpiece* of his Handwork, and the most *perfect Image* of himself. It is *spiritual* like him, it is *intelligent* and *immortal* like him. All the things of this World are nothing to compare to it: 'Tis made to possess God, and to be happy with him. How comes it then to be so *basely* sold for a brutish Pleasure, for a little earthly Dust?

A *Soul* is so *valuable* in the sight of God, that whatever his *Divine Goodness* has at any time effected in the order of *Grace* or *Nature*, is for its Benefit: If he has sent his only begotten *Son* into the World, it was for no other end than the *Salvation* of a *Soul*: If he has suffer'd him to let out the *last Drop* of his *Blood*, it was for the *Salvation* of a *Soul*: If he ceases not to inspire us with his heavenly *Graces*, it is for the *Salvation* of our *Souls*: If he has created the World out of nothing, it is all for the *Good* of our *Souls*.

Christians, what are we doing? shall we undervalue so great a *Treasure*? shall Sin that's worse than nothing take place of our *Souls*? shall we thus make them the Companions of tormented Devils, ever to blaspheme that *sacred Deity* which created them to glorify it? Let us not thus miserably throw away our *Souls*.

Examine yourselves, and in your daily *Meditations* propose to your *Thoughts* the *Price* of a *Soul*: Let its eternal *Welfare* be your chiefest Care. If the Devil shall tempt

you

you to *Pride, Malice, or Ambition*; tell him you have a dear Soul to *save*, and you are resolv'd to save it: If the *Flesh* shall allure you with its *impure Baits*; tell it you have a Soul created to the *Likeness of God*, and that you will not stain it with those base Sins: If the *World* shall strive to lead you away with *Vanity*; tell it you have a *Soul* created to serve *God*, and in *him alone* shall it repose for ever.

16th Day. *On a Soul that has thrown herself into the Arms of her Creator.*

R E F L E C T I O N II.

I know not whether I shall be lost or sav'd; I know not if I am worthy of Love or Hatred; I cannot tell whether I go forward or backward in Virtue; and yet in this *Confusion of Thought*, it is my *Comfort*, that I am in the *Arms* of an indulgent *God*. Does my End draw near? Shall my Life be replenish'd with Joy or Tears? Shall it be oppress'd with melancholy Dejections, or expos'd to the Tongues of malicious Detractors? In this *Uncertainty* of Incidents, the *Trust* I place in *God* is my *only Comfort*.

O *God*, I cast myself into thy *blessed Embraces*: Let my Friends betray me, let my Enemies persecute me on every Side, thy *Will be done*: Let them rob me of my *Goods*, or asperse

asperte my Innocence with the blackest Calumnies, thy *Will be done*: Let me be reduc'd to Beggary, and ready to perish for want of Necessaries; what can I desire besides thee, who art the Bliss of Heaven? O Lord, thou art my *God* and my *All*.

Is not such a Soul the most happy of Creatures? Is she not wrap'd up in Peace and Pleasures? Is she troubled with the Miseries of this wretched World? No, she is in the *Arms of God*, and under his Protection; she loves, and her *Love* is stronger than Death; her Enemies cannot prevail over her. Are we come to this *Perfection*? Does it appear by our *Lives* we are in the *Arms of God*, as a Child in the Embraces of a tender Parent? Is it thus, when we so easily yield to the Suggestions of our Enemies? Is it so, when we fret and repine at almost every Disappointment?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to practise this *Christian Resignation*: in order thereto, beg this Grace of God in your most fervent Prayers: Cry aloud with *David*, and with his Spirit, *O Lord, what is there for me in Heaven; or besides thee, what would I have on Earth!* *O the God of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* (*Psalms 72.*)

17th Day.

17th Day. *On the Breathings of a Soul
in Union with her God.*

REFLECTION III.

O Lord, I desire to *rest* in thee ; thou art my *Portion* and my *Inheritance* for ever. Behold, I consecrate myself, and do inseparably unite my Heart to thee ; govern it as thou pleasest ; may it become *one* with thine, till it is *swallow'd up* in *Love*. Banish from my Thoughts *all Affection* to Creatures ; what have they to do with a *Heart united* to thee ?

O ancient *Truth* ! how *lovely* art thou, and how *little belov'd* ! What is a Father, a Wife, a Child, if compar'd to thee, dearest Lord ; and why have I lov'd them *more* ? O *Fire* of *Divine Love*, consume my Heart with thy *Seraphic Flames*. When shall I be dissolv'd, to enjoy my *God* in *full Possession* with his *Saints* ? Speak, O Lord, to my love-languishing Soul : Shall I be despis'd by a false *World* ? It is what I *desire* for thy *Sake*. Shall I become a Victim to its raging Fury ? I shall rejoice to suffer for thy *Sake*. These are the pious *Breathings* of a Soul united to her *God*.

Are our Souls in this Disposition ? Can we say it, when they are so *strongly fix'd* on the Things of this *World*, and so *coldly* upon *Heaven* ? Does not the inordinate *Love* of Creatures *captivate* our *Hearts* ? do we take *Afflictions* with an *bumble Resignation* to the Divine

Divine Appointments, and rejoice under the Weight of them ? Alas ! our daily Actions too evidently manifest the contrary Sentiments of our Souls.

Examine yourselves, and see how *conformable* your Lives have been to this blessed Union. Take it not to be a Virtue unnecessary, and only the Business of the greatest Saints : 'Tis every Christian's Duty to aim thereat. Ah ! could we say with St. Paul ; *I live now, not I, but Christ in me.* (Gal. 2.)

18th Day. On Perfection.

REFLECTION I.

AS an Image ought to be like its Original, or a Child his Father, so are we to resemble our Divine Original, Lord and Father: 'Tis what Christ teaches us ; *Be you perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matt. 5.) And are we so, when our Passions remain untam'd, our Affections misplac'd, our Devotions cold, and our Imperfections carel'd as much as ever ? Alas ! we shall never thus become true Sons of our Father who is in Heaven. (Matt. 5.)

There's no standing still in this Life : not to advance in the way of *Virtue*, is to go back : *not to gain, is to lose Ground.* (St. Aug.) Ah ! how ought we to lament our unhappy State, when once we begin to *lose* what we had obtain'd of *Virtue* ! The *unprofitable Servant*, who

who improv'd not his Talent, was in punishment thereof severely chastis'd ; and can we expect to be us'd more kindly ? No, cast the unprofitable Servant into utter Darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. (Mat. 25.)

The Student labours hard to acquire Learning ; the Crafts-man takes pains to improve in his Trade ; the Merchant is very sollicitous to encrease his Stock ; and shall the Christian only neglect to aspire at *Perfection*, to purchase Heaven ? O God, how much Time have I lost ! How backward have I been in my spiritual Progress ! How have I *misemploy'd* my Talents, and made void thy Graces ! How *imperfect* am I ! Lord, I have said, now I will begin ; (Psalm 76.) I will begin to recover those Graces I have lost ; without delay will I begin my Journey to Heaven ; nor will I rest, till I am happily arriv'd at that blessed Place.

Examine yourselves, and labour all you can to attain *Perfection*. Say not, it is the Business only of *Recluses*, and the greatest Saints ; for 'tis every one's Duty to aim thereat. Say not 'tis enough *not to offend* ; this is a Stratagem the Devil often lays to subvert Souls.

19th Day. *On the way to Perfection.*

REFLECTION II.

WE are all Pilgrims in this World, and therefore should we always be marching forward to our Heavenly Country: Let us not consider how far we have gone, but what remains to our Journey's End. 'Tis a great Step to Perfection, to forget the former good Works of our Lives, and only to consider how much we want to bring us to Heaven. It was St. Paul's Method, and the Practice of the Saints. Happy is he, say St. Hierome, who considers not what he did Yesterday, but what he ought to do To-day, to improve in Virtue: By this means we shall always keep ourselves in a State of Humility and renew our Fervour in Grace, till we are crown'd with Glory: Let us therefore practise it.

Another Step to Perfection is, not to be contented with an ordinary Virtue, but to aim at some heroic Degrees thereof: To strive to embrace a most profound Humility, a perfect Mastery of our Passions, rigid Self-denials, and an entire Conformity to the Will of God. Ah! such would be our Lives, did we truly love God with our whole Hearts.

A third Step is, to labour to overcome all Imperfections: This may be a Thing almost impossible to effect; however, we are still to do

do our utmost in order to surmount them ; more especially all those of Slothfulness or Neglect.

A fourth Step to Perfection is, to have always before our Eyes the Example of Christ and his blessed Saints : Alas ! how far are we from imitating the *Virtues of Jesus Christ* ! How much do we want of the *Humility* of the Publican, of the *Penance* of the *Baptist*, of the *Zeal* of St. *Paul*, of the *Repentance* of *Magdalen* ! How much do we want of the *Obedience* of the *Apostles*, of the *Patience* of the *Martyrs*, of the *Resignation* of *Confessors*, of the *Piety* of *Virgins* ! They were all perfect.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to tread these *Steps to Perfection* : Lead such Lives, as may shine to the Edification of every Neighbour : Be sure not to slight small Faults, but labour to retrench them : Say often to yourselves, what St. *Bernard* said to himself ; *Bernard, Bernard, why can't thou bither !*

20th Day. On the inward Man.

REFLECTION III.

T will avail us little to have the outward Appearance of Virtue, unless our Hearts be truly such. It is not the *Exterior*, but the *Interior* of a Christian that makes him a Saint : God beheld the *Heart* of *Abel* when he offer'd his Sacrifice. Let us cultivate

ours ; let our *chiefest Concern* be for the *inward Man.*

The *Interior* of a good Christian always walks in the *Presence* of God : Whether he prays, works, studies or eats, he ever considers his God *beholds* him : This is his **sure Fence** in the *Heat of Battle* ; this is his **Comfort** under the sharpest Trials. Do we make it ours ? Have we our God *perpetually before our Eyes* ? Christians, had we so, we shou'd not so *easily relapse* into Sin ; our *Lives* wou'd not be fill'd with so many *Imperfections*.

The *Interior* of a Christian is *replenish'd* with God ; the Divine Goodness is the *Object* of its Love, the *Love* of its Soul. How happy shou'd we be, were we *fill'd* with God ? But alas ! such is our Misery, that we can hardly think of him. We are full of nothing but Sin and Self-love ; of Pride, Vanity, and worldly Pleasures. The *inward Man* is in *perfect Conformity* with the Will of God : He receives all Afflictions with an humble *Resignation* to the Divine Appointments : His daily Prayer is, *O Lord, thy Will be done.* (Mat. 6.) And is it ours ? Perhaps we cannot fast, nor wear the Hair-shirt : It may be we are not able to perform the most rigorous Work of *Penance* ; but we may and ought to *conform* ourselves to the *Will of God* in every Particular.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to regulate your *inward Man*. Place God always before

before your Eyes. Let his *Will* be the Center of yours. Offer all your Actions to his greater Glory. Propose to yourselves the Example of *Christ*, who was in *perfect Union* with God his Father. *My Father and I am one.* (John 10.)

21st Day. *On Silence.*

REFLECTION I.

GOD from all Eternity observed a strict Silence, and would have held it to Eternity, had not his exceeding great Love for Man forced him to break it. In the deepest Silence of dark Night the *Word Incarnate* appear'd to redeem us. Thirty Years of his Life were wrap'd up in Silence. The *Holy Ghost* descended upon the Disciples when they were in silent Prayer. He silently infuses his Lights into our Souls. Can there be a more powerful Motive for the practising this Lesson, than to find it recommended by a joint Concurrence of the most blessed Trinity?

The greatest *Saints* ever made it their Study to keep themselves in an humble Silence. They were sensible of the too common Excess in Discourse, and that nothing was more apt to distract their Minds: They knew it to be a Thing almost impracticable to speak much and well; and that it requir'd an extraordinary Grace, which they own'd themselves unworthy of. In this wise and profound

Silence, they merited particular Aids from above ; here the Divine Goodness manifested himself to their love-languishing Souls ; here there passed Heavenly Conferences between their *Souls* and *God* : Why don't we imitate them ?

Christians, if we must speak, let it be of God's Mercies, and the singular Love of Jesus to us ; let it be of the large Promises he has made of rewarding our Conquests with a Crown of Glory ; let our Speech tend to the rooting-out Vice, to the Conversion of a Neighbour. O sweetest Saviour, did we truly love thee, we should have thee oftner in our Hearts, and Mouths ; nothing would go down that did not relish of thee.

Examine yourselves, and see how far you have practised this advantageous Lesson : It is a very great Help to *Perfection*. Let not the empty Trifles of the World on every Occasion interrupt your *Silence*. Be not too forward in *Discourse* ; avoid all Impertinence in it ; and let a decent *Modesty* be your Guide.

22d Day. On Solitude.

REFLECTION II.

THREE are two Kinds of Solitude ; one of the *Body*, and the other of the *Heart*. That of the *Body* is when we are with *God alone* ; that of the *Heart*, when we chiefly think of him, and make him, the *Center* of

of our Hearts : Both these *Solitudes* are a Help to *Perfection*. 'Twas in the *Desart*, God shower'd *Manna* upon the Children of *Israel*: There he gave the *Law* in Thunder and Lightning : There he fed Thousands with multiply'd Bread : There was he transfigur'd before three of his Disciples : There did he pray and fast for us. Surely the *Desart* must be well-pleasing to him, when he has given us such Marks of his Goodness in it.

Christians, let us then often retire into the *Desart* with Christ and his Saints : I mean not into the *Desart* of *Mary of Egypt*, or St. *Jerom's* Wilderness, but into the *Solitude* of our Chambers ; to shut out for a time the *Distractions* of the World, and to think on Heaven. Did we so, we shou'd not be thus led away by unprofitable, vain, and sinful Company : *One Day's Retreat* in the Month, or Week, wou'd not be judg'd so insupportable to us.

O my Soul, retire from the stormy Noise of the World ; enter quickly into thy mental *Solitude*, into the *Closet* of thy Heart : There is no Company like that of Jesus : His *Words* will enkindle in thy Breast the *Flames of Love* ; he will unfold the unspeakable Joys of Heaven, and teach thee the way to enjoy them for ever. O happy *Solitude* !

Examine yourselves, and resolve upon a *Retreat* one Day in the Month, in order to settle the Affairs of Eternity : Your Chamber, Garden, or any quiet Place may be your

Desart. Enter daily into the Solitude of your Heart : Neither the Court, Shop, Plow, nor Kitchen, ought to hinder your Retirement into the Wounds of Jesus.

23d Day. *On the Peace of a Christian.*

REFLECTION I.

THERE were two Sorts of *Peace*; a worldly *Peace*, and a holy *Peace*: The *Peace* the World gives is like itself, *false* and momentary: The *Peace* of God is *true* and eternal. We enjoy this *Peace*, when in all our *Sufferings* we ever submit to the Divine Will, and are directed by it in all we do. O God of *Peace*, afford us this *Blessing*: Be thou the eternal *Peace* of our Souls: *Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.* (Mat. 6.)

Nothing can come amiss to the *peaceable Soul*: She has her *Heaven upon Earth*: Does a malicious World proclaim *War* against her? she flies for *Sanctuary* in the *Will* and *Pleasure* of her Lord. Let rash Judgments put the worst Construction upon what she does; she submits in *Peace*: Let Afflictions persecute, or Death threaten her with its approaching *Terrors*; she is *undisturbed*; she comforts herself with this Thought, that what she *suffers* is through the *Will* of God, and will end in the *Fruit* of an eternal *Reward*.

Do

Do we enjoy this *blessed Peace*, when we are thus afflicted at the usual Disappointments of human Life? when we are not able to brook the least Reproach or Disrespect? when our Minds are fill'd with a thousand Fears, Jealousies, and Complaints, and even upon weak Surmises? Are we in *Peace*, when we make no scruple of offending God by Sin, and are running headlong to everlasting Perdition? No, there is no *Peace for the Wicked*. (Isaiah 57.) Sweet Jesus, afford us the happy Treasure of a *lasting Peace*. A peaceable Conscience must necessarily be the greatest Blessing on Earth. Thou gavest it to thy Disciples after thy Resurrection, give it also to us. It was thy *Comfort* during the Course of thy Life, and at thy Death.

Examine yourselves, and see if you possess this Christian *Peace*. If you have it not, labour to obtain it by *fervent Prayer*, by a *Detestation of Sin*, by the Practice of *Humility*, and an *entire Conformity* to the Will of God. Think not of finding this *Peace* in the World; the World cannot give it.

24th Day. On the means of acquiring true Peace.

REFLECTION II.

TH^ERE is no *Peace for the Wicked*. (Is.48.)

Every Sinner is at war with God; who can crush him upon the spot into his original Nothing.

Nothing. He knows there remains but a thin Thread of Life betwixt him and Hell; and cannot tell, but in Vengeance he may be cut off under the Deformity of his Sins, and become a Prey to Devils. His Soul is every-way enslaved to Sensuality; 'tis oppressed with Confusion; it lies at the Mercy of restless Passions; and can he think of enjoying true Peace? especially when he's an Enemy to the Author of it? No, there's no Peace for the Wicked. To be in Peace, we must be in Grace.

Peace is chiefly to be purchased by the Practice of Humility; seeing our Hearts cannot rest but in their own Center, which is the Center of their Nothing. Let it be our main Concern to please God, and we shall rest in Peace: He is not unconstant like the World, but always the same, and infinitely charming. Let God alone be the Object of our Desires, and he will fill us with Peace: Let us throw ourselves into the Arms of his Providence, and we shall sleep in Peace: He is a most indulgent Parent: Whatever he does, is for our greater Good.

O God, how little do I observe the Means of obtaining true Peace, when my Life is composed of Pride, Envy, and a greedy Affection to the Things of this World! I cannot but desire this blessed Peace, tho' I use no due Endeavours to find it out: Grant me then thy Grace, that I may seek it rightly, and effectually enjoy it.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and earnestly sue for this *Christian Peace*. In order to obtain it, withdraw your Affections from the Vanities of the World, and fix them on Heaven. Say with St. *Augustin*, and with his Spirit; *Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our Hearts cannot rest, till they rest in thee.*

25th Day. *On a good Conscience.*

R E F L E C T I O N.

A Good Conscience is a lasting Feast: (Prov. 15.) 'Tis one of the greatest Blessings upon Earth: It always carries its *God* in its Breast, who is an overflowing Fountain of Comfort to it: His continual Presence gives it a Paradise here on Earth. We cannot indeed absolutely tell if we are *justify'd* or not; yet if we endeavour to live well, and do not find that our *Consciences accuse us*, we ought to make no question, but that we are in a most comfortable way to a happy Eternity.

A good Conscience is never troubled: It rejoices in *Adversity*; it regards all Afflictions as the Effects of *Mercy*, and as *Pledges of Salvation*: It glories in the *Cross of Jesus Christ*: It knows 'tis by the way of *Suffering* it must go to Heaven. Are we in this Disposition? Do we joyfully receive Afflictions? Do we embrace 'em as Blessings, and as Means of establishing our future Happiness?

Or

Or rather, do we not murmur at Providence, and fret at every the least Disappointment?

O God, afford me the happy Gift of a good Conscience: I am sensible it is the greatest Blessing upon Earth. It was *this* that chang'd the Hair-Cloth of Confessors and Racks of Martyrs into Beds of Roses: Without *this*, all the Pleasures of the World are Gall and Misery. O my God, how sweet art thou to those who love thee.

Examine yourselves, and ever labour to preserve a good Conscience. In order thereto, shun all Sin: Withdraw your Affections from the Vanities of the World: Seek no Consolation in Creatures: Throw yourselves into the Arms of Providence: Earnestly petition for the Grace of a Christian Resignation to the Will of God. Ah! could you say with St. Paul; *The Testimony of our Conscience is our Glory.* (2 Cor. 1.)

26th Day. On a virtuous Life.

REFLECTION.

THREE is no Happiness in this World, but in a *virtuous Life*. Virtues have this Excellency, that they fill our Hearts with the greatest Pleasures. Let us labour to obtain them. What Sweetness is there in Patience, if balanced with Revenge! What Content in *Meekness*, in Respect of Anger! What Resignation in *Humility*, in regard of Pride!

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What Transports in *Purity*, if compar'd to Lust !

See what Torments the Martyrs have endur'd for the *Love of Virtue*: 'Tis amazing to consider the Numbers of fair and tender Virgins, who, upon this account, have bravely undergone a thousand Sorts of Martyrdoms. How many more have forsaken the World to preserve their Virtue! Christians! these *blessed Souls* can best inform us of the exceeding Sweetness of a virtuous Life. Let us then imitate their Zeal, Modesty, and Temperance; let us imitate their Humility, Love, and Resignation.

O *virtuous Life!* how lovely must thou be, when thou afford'st our Hearts such Charms of Pleasure! how delightful art thou, when thou sweeten'st the *Gall* of worldly Sorrows, and makest them instrumental to the gaining Heaven! *Without thee, Good is Evil, and Pleasures mix'd with lasting Troubles.* (Sales Intro. p. 5. c. 11.) But can nothing afflict the *virtuous Soul*? No, she is in the Arms of God: Her Heart is *united to*, and *rests in* him.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to enter upon a *virtuous Life*: 'Tis the only way to Happiness in this World, and to Heaven in the next. In order thereto, fly all Sin; be ever upon your guard, and punctual in all Duties: Say from your Hearts with the *Samaritan Woman*; *Lord, give me of this Water.* (John 4.)

27th Day. On Faith.

REFLECTION I.

WHAT the Church proposes to her Children to be believed, she has expressly received from Jesus Christ. She teaches nothing, but what is grounded upon the Authority of God's revealed Word; confirm'd by Miracles; sign'd with the penitential Lives of Confessors; seal'd with the Blood of innumerable Martyrs. She teaches nothing but what the meanest Understanding, by the Help of Faith, is capable of reaching to. O God, we adore thy boundless Mercy; when, *hiding thy Truths from the Wise-ones of the Word, thou hast vouchsafed to reveal 'em to us little ones.* (Mat. 11.) We cannot doubt of the Truths thou hast deliver'd, without questioning thy Authority: There is no prescribing against one Point, without an unjust Violation of the whole.

Our Faith will never save us, unless it be enliven'd with good Works: The Devils believe and tremble: (James 2.) But what are they the better for their dead Faith? Ah! since we believe in a God infinitely Great, let us serve him; a God infinitely Good, let us love him; infinitely Just, let us fear him; and infinitely Holy, let us not sin against him.

We believe that they who are great in the Eyes of Men, are not so in the Sight of God; why then do we breathe after worldly Praises?

We

We believe Christ has placed true Happiness in the doing good Works; and why do we neglect 'em? We believe Humility and a Christian Self-denial are the *two Paths* that lead to Heaven; and can we think of tracing either by a Life of Self-Love, Pride, or Vanity? No, we may as well renounce our *Faith*, as not change our Lives.

Examine yourselves, and let your *Faith* be accompany'd with *good Works*; for a *dead Faith* cannot save you. Thank God that he has call'd you to the *true one*: And remember your Judgment will be more terrible than the Heathens, if you live not up to what your *Faith* teaches you.

28th Day. *On the Gift of Faith.*

REFLECTION II.

WITHOUT *Faith* 'tis impossible to please God. (Heb. 11.) My *Faith* must be *entire*, or I shall not please him: To believe *some Points* and disbelieve *others*, is to believe by *Fancy*, and not out of a *Divine Motive*: Let me pretend to keep Nine of the Commandments, and yet live and die in the Violation of the Tenth, I shall not be saved; neither shall I, if I live and die in the Disbelief of *any one Point* of *Faith*, declar'd such by the Catholic Church, guided by the unerring Spirit of God. To reject *one Article*, is to reject the *Authority of Jesus Christ*, upon which

which all are *equally* founded. O God, my Faith shall be *entire*.

Faith is the Foundation of Virtue, Humility, Hope, Love, Patience; all the Virtues are raised upon it. *Faith* humbles us, in opening our Eyes to see God and ourselves: *Faith* makes us *hope*, by proposing Heaven as the Reward of our Labours: *Faith* inflames our *Love*, by fixing our Thoughts upon the Perfections of God, and his Mercies to us: *Faith* supports our *Patience*, by assuring us that a *light and momentary Tribulation* works above measure an eternal Weight of Glory in us. (2 Cor. 4.)

Lord, augment my Faith: (Luke 17.) I desire no more than a *lively one*: With it I have all, and cannot fail of being happy. It was a *lively Faith* encourag'd thy Martyrs to spill their Blood: It caused thy Confessors to renounce the World, and to esteem all as *Dross to gain Thee.* (Phil. 3.) Lord, increase my Faith.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly pray for this *Gift of Faith*: 'Tis a great Grace, and must be obtain'd by Prayer. Had you a Faith strong enough, you might move Mountains. Whenever the Devil shall tempt you to sin, cry aloud with the Apostles, *Lord, increase our Faith:* With this Weapon you will assuredly defeat him.

29th Day. On *Acts of Faith.*

REFLECTION III.

O God, I do entirely believe whatever thy Apostolic Church teaches me; and had rather die than renounce any one Article of it. I believe what my Senses are not able to reach to; that thou art my God, and hast prepar'd a Heaven for a Reward of my good Works, and a Hell for the bad. I believe what my Reason can never fathom, that there are three Persons in thy blessed Godhead, and that thy Eternal Son was made Man in Time to redeem my Soul. I do firmly believe what almost all my Senses are mistaken in, that the very Substance of thy Body and Blood is truly on our Altars under the Appearances of Bread and Wine: My God! has not thy beloved Son told me so? And shall I not believe him? Shall I ever dare to question what thy Eternal Truth has said?

Lord, I am not ashame'd to profess the Faith of thy crucify'd Son, but do glory in it. When I consider it founded by a Man, contemn'd, and basely murder'd; when I find it establish'd over all the World, not by the Sword, but by ordinary Fishermen? when I see the greatest Monarchs submitting their Necks to this humble Yoke, and fall at the Feet of poor Priests, I am forced to cry out, 'Tis thou, O Lord, who hast done these Wonders. When I consider again the Antiquity of this Faith, and

that it has been constantly professed above seventeen hundred Years; when I behold the *Purity* of its *Doctrine*, and the *Sanctity* and *Labours* of those who live up to it; when I behold the *Majesty* of its *Ceremonies*, the *profound Learning* of its *Teachers*, and the *large List* of its numerous *Martyrs*; then am I convinced *it is the Work only of thy Right-hand.* (Psalm 117.)

O God, I beseech thee so to strengthen me in *this Faith*, that the most insinuating Artifices of the Enemy of Mankind may never shake it. Grant that my Life may be *conformable* to it in every Particular. Lord, increase my *Faith*: (Luke 17.) 'Tis impossible I should offend Thee, did I seriously consider thy reveal'd Truths.

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without offering up to God some Acts of *Faith*. Remember *the just Man lives by Faith*. (Rom. 1.) Follow St. Paul's Advice; *let us walk by Faith, and not by Sight.* (2 Cor. 5.)

30th Day. On Motives of Fear.

REFLECTION.

WHAT have we been? Sinners. This we know, but cannot tell whether our Sins are *pardon'd*: We have confessed them but cannot tell if we have done it *worthily*. Perhaps we have conceal'd some mortal Sin out of Fear, Shame, or Carelessness: Perhaps

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Perhaps our Hearts have not been truly contrite: Indeed we have reason to apprehend it; when we so frequently relapse, and live on without amending.

What are we at present? Are we in a State of Grace? Are our Consciences so well satisfy'd, that in case we were summon'd this very Moment to bid adieu to the World, we should crave no Truce? I fear we cannot say it. Alas! how often does *Satan* transform himself into an Angel of Light! How often do we mistake Vice for Virtue! How unhappily does Passion blind our Judgment, so as to think those Sins *venial*, which are more than so! Many times our Actions are seemingly good; but are we sure they are acceptable to God? May there not be a great Defect of Intention? O God, 'tis only *Thou canst* find the Bottom of our Hearts. (1 Kings 17.)

What shall we be? Shall we be happy with the Saints, or miserable with the Damn'd? All depends upon a *good Will*, than which nothing is more *unconstant*. We cannot be saved without the *Grace* of God, which we are uncapable of meriting. We are not so excellent as were the *apostate Angels*, nor honour'd with greater Favours than was the Apostle *Judas*; and yet they are lost. Ah! we have very great reason to fear our uncertain Lot.

Examine yourselves, and with *Fear and Trembling* work out your *Salvation*. (Phil. 2.)

Despair of your own Strength, and confide in God. Pray with David; *Pierce, O Lord, my Flesh with thy Holy Fear:* (Psalm 118.) I confess I am a frail Vessel; *help me by thy Grace,* or I am undone for ever.

31st Day. On Motives of Hope.

REFLECTION.

GOD is our *Maker*: As it is natural for a Work-man to like his own Work, so does our Lord regard us, the *Work of his Hands*: He is as tender of us, as of the Apple of his Eye; and if a Mother shou'd forget the *Fruit of her Womb*, he cannot forget us: (Isaiah 49.) He has engraven us in his Heart. Ah! what Motives of *Hope!* God is our *Father*, and the *Best of Fathers*: he will easily forgive the Offences, and forget the Follies of his repenting Child: He received the *Prodigal*, the *Thief*, *Magdalen*, and the *Publican*, into his open Embraces: He knows our Want; he is able to succour us; he loves us exceedingly; and after all, can he see us perish? No, let us put our *Trust in him*, and we shall never be confounded.

My Soul, behold *thy* God cloathed in the Habit of a mortal Man, for *thy Sake*: See his Tears in the Manger; he shed them for *Thee*: Hear his sweet Voice; *Why will ye die, O House of Israel?* (Ezek. 33.) See how he spills his Blood *far thee* on Mount Calvary.

Can't

Can'st thou *distrust*, when thou seest the Blood
of thy *dying God* running out to wash away
thy Sins ?

Lord, what has not *thy Goodness* done for
me? Thou hast left to *thy Church* the Scrip-
tures, Sacraments, Examples, Instructions,
and Prayers, *for my Benefit*: Thou hast or-
der'd *thy Angels* to stand by me Day and
Night, to guard my Soul: *Thy Blessed Mo-
ther* is a Mother to me; *thy glorious Saints*
help me by their Suffrages; Heaven and
Earth concur to make me happy! What can
I desire more, or thou give? The most aban-
don'd Sinner has no reason to despair.

Examine yourselves, and under all Ap-
pointments, still *hope* in the Divine Good-
ness: You cannot want *Motives* to excite
you to it. Always remember that nothing
can befall you but through the *Will* or *Per-
mission* of a *loving God*, who can, and often
does turn the worst of Evils to our greater
Good.

Practical Reflections

FOR

JUNE and DECEMBER.

First DAY.

On the Love of God.

REFLECTION I.

WE must love God above all Things: We must love him more than Friends, Company, Riches, Pleasures, or our very selves. St. Paul did so: *Who shall separate me from the Love of God? Shall Tribulation, Distress, or Famine; shall Danger, Persecution, or the Sword? Neither Life nor Death; nothing shall diminish the Love I bear to Jesus Christ.* (Rom. 8.) Are we in this resolute Disposition? Can we say it, when even the weakest Temptations of the Devil, when the basest Suggestions of the Flesh, when the vilest Pleasures of a vain World gain upon our Hearts, and wholly divide them from the *Love of God?*

Our Works are dead without the Love of God. Do we believe in *Jesus Christ?* Do we plentifully relieve the Poor? Have we the

Courage

Courage to deliver our Bodies up to Flames? St. Paul (1 Cor. 13.) assures us all is *Nothing* without the Love of God. Do we affect a Regularity in our Lives? Do we pray, or undertake voluntary Mortifications? We are still *Nothing without the Love of God.*

Let us therefore *love him with all our Hearts.* *Love and do what thou wilt,* was the Saying of St. *Augustin.* Nothing is hard to him that truly loves: The Saints found it so: Tho' their Torments were in themselves cruel, Love changed them into Roses; tho' their Hair-Shirts were mortifying, Love sweeten'd them into Pleasures; tho' their Passions were rebellious, Love made them the Instruments of their future Glory.

Examine yourselves, and see if the Love of God commands your Thoughts: See if it be the Rule of your daily Actions. Implore this Grace in your most fervent Prayers, saying often in the Expression of the Church, *Come, Holy Ghost, replenish our Hearts, and kindle the Fire of thy Love in them.*

2d Day. On *Acts of Love.*

REFLECTION II.

O God, thou dost command me to *love thee,* and shall I not obey? If I *love thee not,* thou threaten'st me with Misery; and is there a greater Misery than not to love thee? Thou hast done all that thy Wisdom could invent

to win our Hearts ; and shall we refuse thee this small Favour ? No Happiness in this Life can compare with thy Love ; and shall we prefer to it the empty Pleasures of this wretched World ? Mercifully, O Lord, look down upon us, and soften our stony Hearts with the Fire of thy Love : If thou must avenge our past Folly, let it be by sealing upon our Souls thy Divine Love, maugre our senseless and wilful Opposition.

Though we have reason to apprehend the Truth of it, yet we dare not say *we do not love thee*; lest thy charming Perfections, which most deservedly challenge our Affections; lest all created Beings, which are so many Blessings thou hast bestow'd upon us, should rise up in Judgment, and condemn our Ingratitude : We have therefore loved thee, O ancient Truth, but *we have lov'd thee too late!*
St. Aug.

O God, when I consider thou hast loved me from all Eternity ; when I consider thou didst then love me when I was thy Enemy ; how am I confounded at my past Neglects ! Once more, O God, look down upon me, and *kindle the Fire of thy Love* in my frozen Heart : May it ever burn till it be melted in Love : I know my Heart is only made for thee ; nor can it rest till it rests in thee.

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without offering to your God some Acts of Love. Let neither Self-love, nor the Love of Creatures ever take place of the Love of God. De-

plore

plore all past Neglects, saying with St. Augustine, and with his Spirit; *O Divine Love, which I have known too late, from which I have wander'd too long! To be deprived of thee for ever is the Punishment of Hell: To possess thee for ever is the Happiness of Heaven.*

3d Day. *On the Marks of true Love.*

REFLECTION III.

WE often say we love God, and are as often mistaken. There is hardly a Day passes over our Heads, but we are ever and anon crying out, *O Lord, I love thee;* when, at the same time, our Affections to Sin, our indulg'd Passions, our cherish'd Imperfections, and almost daily Actions, give the Lye to our Words.

The Love of God is a *Love above all Things.* Is ours such? Don't the things of this World stand in competition with it? Are we prepar'd to lose all, rather than this Love? The Love of God is a *disinterested Love;* it seeks not itself, but what belongs to God. Ours must be such: We must love him for his own sake; we must love him, because he's infinitely good in himself. The Love of God is *active:* It does not only lie burning in the Breast, but breaks forth and appears in all the Actions of the Lover. Does our Love do so? Are our Thoughts sweeten'd with

with Love? Do our Words breathe forth Love? Are our Actions animated with Love?

The Love of God is an *undaunted* Love: It regards not what the World can say: No Affection to Creatures is capable of shaking it: It fears not the malicious Suggestions of *Satan*: It bids Defiance to the alluring Charms of the Flesh: It matters not the scandalous Reproaches of the Envious, nor Death itself. Is our Love so victorious? The Love of God is *patient, humble, chaste, resign'd*: Alas! we cannot say ours is such, when the least Contradiction puts us into a Ferment; when the smallest Disappointments render us so impatient; when we magnify ourselves upon every Occasion; and pamper our Bodies in Diet and Apparel.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to dispell whatever may overcloud your *Love of God*. When you find it accompany'd with these *Marks*, you may assure yourselves it can't be counterfeit Divide not your Hearts between God and the World. Look upon the *Saints*; there you'll see they *lov'd* their God with their *whole Heart*.

4th Day. *On the Love of our Neighbour.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

THREE is no loving God without the Love of our Neighbour. *He that says he loves God, and hates his Brother, is a Liar.*

(*1 John*)

(1 John 4.) Our blessed Saviour never press'd any Precept more upon us, than this of fraternal Charity : *By this, the World shall know you to be my Disciples, if you love one another* (John 13.)

Our Neighbour is the noblest Work of God's Creation ; he bears a lively Image of God himself ; he is created to be happy with the Angels in Heaven ; there to sing forth the Praises of his Maker : And shall we not love him ? He has been redeem'd by the Blood of Christ ; he is his Child, and our Brother ; and shall we not love him ? Ah ! let us *love our Neighbour as ourselves* (Mat. 22.) We fight under the same Banner of Faith ; we communicate in the Prayers, the holy Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Church ; we partake of the most Divine Banquet of *Union*, the Body of Christ. Let us therefore be united in the Bonds of Love.

Alas ! how few in this distracted World religiously comply with this pressing Duty ! How many on the other hand actually harbour Malice in their Hearts ; murder their Neighbour by Detraction ; and commit Violence on his Goods and Person ! Many of the better Sort too have reason to apprehend a Want of Charity ; when their *Diversion*, as they term it, is in exposing their Neighbour, and their Chamber and Table-talk of his Failings.

Examine yourselves, and be sure you *be in Charity with every Neighbour*. Bear with his

his Imperfections, since yourselves are often-times subject to many. These little Trials may be a Means of your inheriting a Crown of Glory. Be not too censorious ; for it is an Argument of an uncharitable Heart. Let that Maxim, *Do as you would be done by*, (Luke 6.) be the Object of your Thoughts, and the Practice of your Lives.

5th Day. *On the Rules of Charity.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

WE are often mistaken in the Love of our Neighbour. In case we bear no Malice in our Hearts, or do him no Injury, we immediately conclude we have done our Duty : But, alas ! how far off may we still be from the Rules of Charity ! The first Rule of Charity is, that *we love our Neighbour as ourselves*. (Mat 22.) How is that ? The Love we bear ourselves is a *tender Love*, 'tis sensible of the least Evil, it sticks at nothing to promote our own well-being. Is our Love of our Neighbour *such* ? Do we compassionate him in his Sufferings ? Do we run in to his Assistance when we are able to relieve him ? If we fail in the Practice, our Love can't be true.

The second Rule of Charity is, that *we do as we would be done by*. (Mat. 7.) We seldom like to be treated with Severity ; we find it a hard matter not to resent a Reproach ; and

are

are little pleas'd to be wrongfully spoken of : We can hardly brook the exposing of our Failings, or the malicious Constructions of our innocent Actions : No, we desire to have our Failings over-look'd, our Weaknesses condescended to ; we desire to be well spoken of, and lov'd by all. And is this our Conduct to our Neighbour ? If it be not, our Love is false.

The third Rule of Charity is, that *we love our Neighbour as Christ has lov'd us.* (John 13.) How is that ? He has lov'd us without any Merit on our Side, or Benefit to himself ; he has lov'd us, to the sacrificing his Repose and Life. Has our Life been such ? Alas ! I fear we cannot pretend to it. O God, I must *love thee more, and my Neighbour too,* than hitherto I have done, if I think to comply with these Christian Rules.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to live up to these *Rules of Charity.* Fix them always before your Eyes ; impress them on your Hearts ; that whenever you shall be tempted to a *Breach of them,* you may resolutely say, *O Lord, thou hast commanded me to love my Neighbour, and I am resolv'd to do it.*

6th Day. On forgiving Injuries.

R E F L E C T I O N III.

WE must forgive our Enemies. *Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you ;* (Luke 6.) not else. Without this *Forgiveness,* our most zealous

zealous Prayers, the very Prayer Christ himself has taught us, will prove our Condemnation: Let us deny ourselves, let us sacrifice our Reason to Truth, our Lives for Religion, Christ Jesus to his Father in the adorable Mass; all is nothing without Mercy: *Go reconcile yourself to your Brother, and then make your Offering.* (Mat. 5.)

Did we seriously reflect on what our Sins have deserv'd; and that by one mortal one we have incur'd the Guilt of everlasting Punishment: Did we truly consider, that notwithstanding our Tears, there may remain a heavy Satisfaction still due to the Divine Justice: Did we behold the Patience of our great God in bearing with us, and that eternal Crown, which has been purchas'd by a meek Submission to Reproaches; it is certain, we should not so easily resent or return Injuries.

Christians, hear the dying Prayer of your crucify'd Lord: *Father, forgive them:* Tho' my Ears ring with Blasphemies, tho' my Tongue be embitter'd with Gall, my Body all cover'd with Wounds, and I hang dying for my Executioners Sins, I beseech thee pardon them: By these Thorns which pierce my Head, by the Tears that fall thick from my Eyes, by my gaping Wounds which must move thee to Pity, *forgive them,* for they know not what they do. (Luke 23.) Will not so excellent an Example move us?

Examine yourselves, and be sure you forgive all Injuries from your Hearts. To forgive

give and forget is the Christian's Duty; which must be done, as you tender your Salvation: Tho' Nature be averse to it, you *must* make it bend: Let your Prayer therefore be, *O Lord, forgive us our Trespasses, and give us Grace to forgive them that trespass against us.*

7th Day. *On Fraternal Correction.*

REFLECTION IV.

Every Christian is oblig'd to put a Stop to the Sins of his Neighbour, when he is able to do it either by himself or others. This Duty is so pressing, that it is in vain to think of possessing God without the Practice of it. *God has given to every one the Charge of his Neighbour:* (Eccl. 17.) And yet, alas! how little do Christians reflect upon it! how few concern themselves about it!

Had we a *true Love* for God or our Neighbour, we should be *far more zealous* in this Duty than we have hitherto been. No *loyal Subject* can without Concern hear his *Prince ill spoken of*; no *loving Child* can see his *Father* upon the point of being murder'd, and not run to his Assistance: God is our *King* and *Father*; and can we tamely sit still, and hear his *Name blasphem'd*, and see him persecuted by the Crimes of Sinners, without appearing in his Defence? Ah! this is an evident *Sign* of our Want of Love. Again, did we see a Person going to cut his own Throat,

Throat, or running into a Fire, we should immediately stop his Hand, and pull him back : Nay, did we see a Sheep or Cow labouring for Life in a deep Water, we should not fail to give them all the Help we could. And can we see a *Christian*, a *Brother* in *Jesus Christ*, running headlong into the Pit of Hell, without endeavouring to stop him in his Course ? Ah ! 'tis too true ; *An Aſſ falls, and there is ſome body to lift it up ; a Soul perishes, and no one regards it.* St. Bern.

Christians, if this be your Neglect, I must tell you, you have no true Love for your Neighbour. Can you see your innocent Brother's Life corrupted by the ill Example of other's, and not prevent it when 'tis in your Power ? Can you see so many Souls perish, for whom *Christ* died !

Examine yourselves, and let neither Fear, or the Apprehension of *Displeasure* hinder you from obviating the known Vices of your Neighbour. This may be effected by good Counsel, Reprehensions, Chastisements, or Complaints, as Occasion shall require. Remember, this is the Duty of every *Christian*, tho' more particularly of Pastors, Parents, and those in Office.

8th Day. On Humility.

REFLECTION I.

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of Heart. (Mat. 11.) Sweetest Lord, of whom shall we learn to be *humble*, but of thee? We cannot learn it of ourselves, for our very Nature is made up of *Pride*: We cannot learn it from the World, it is full of *Pride*: The Devil can't teach it us, he is damn'd by *Pride*. Christians, there's no raising the *Fabrick* of *Virtue*, but upon the *Foundation* of *Humility*. Tho' we are just in our Dealings, free from *Intemperance*, kind to our Neighbours, and decline all criminal Engagements with the World, yet *without Humility* we shall never be sav'd. *Christ* has said it; *Unless you be as little Children, you shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Mat. 18.) Are we as *humble* as they? Are our Lives as innocent?

Alas! we are Sinners: Let us therefore *buckle* ourselves at the Sight of our Misery. Do we suffer from the World and from our Passions? Let us *humble* ourselves under these Misfortunes. Are we distracted in Prayer, cold in Devotion, and subject to many Failings? Let us *humble* ourselves under these Weaknesses. We must be *humble* before we can enter Heaven.

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O God,

O God, give me an humble Heart. A contrite and humble Heart thou wilt not despise: (Psalm 50.) Thou didst not despise the Humility of David, nor the Humility of Mary: Thou didst not despise the Humility of the Publican, nor the humble Tears of Magdalen. They are *Humble*, whom thou raisest to eternal Glory.

Examine yourselves, and resolve upon the Practice of this Lesson of *Humility*: Every one is oblig'd to it: Tho' Nature be averse, yet by the Grace of God you may make it bend: Crave therefore his Grace in your most fervent Prayers. Ever have before your Eyes a mean Opinion of yourselves; and remember, you must be little here, if you would be great hereafter.

9th Day On Motives of Humility.

REFLECTION II.

WHAT were we from Eternity? Nothing. What have we been in time? Drawn out of the dark Abyss of nothing; conceiv'd in Sin; and grievous Sinners. What are we? Miserable Dust, incapable of a good Thought: Endow'd indeed with a Memory, but forgetful of our Maker: Beautify'd with an Understanding, but ungratefully we slight him: Privileg'd with a Will, but we rebel against him. Is not this enough to humble us?

What

What shall we be? *Saints or Devils?*
 'Tis all uncertain. If we depend upon the Will of God, his blessed Will is unknown to us; if on ourselves, nothing is more unconstant; if on our good Works, 'tis doubtful if they be accepted: If we depend upon the Sanctity of our Calling, that will not do: Judas was an Apostle, and yet he's lost for ever. The Uncertainty of our future State must be Motive enough to bumble us. Lord, if no Man living shall be justify'd in thy Sight; (Psalms 142.) if when we have done our best, we are unprofitable Servants; what will become of us!

The *Saints* humble themselves in their Concern for us, the *Angels* by protecting us, the *Mother of God* in praying for us; and shall we do nothing for ourselves? *Down, my Soul; stoop, Dust and Ashes;* see, Heaven has humbled itself for thee: *Exalt not thyself, thou art poor and miserable.*

Examine yourselves, and take the Advice of St. Peter, be you humbled under the powerful Hand of God: (1 Peter 5.) You cannot want Motives to induce you to it: Shun as much as possible, all Occasions of Praise: Be not puffed up with the Flatteries of the World: Patiently submit to Reproaches and Contempts: So to do, is a Demonstration of an humble Heart.

10th Day. On the Advantages of
Humility.

REFLECTION III.

THREE is no Sacrifice more acceptable to God than an humble Heart. *He resists the Proud, and gives Grace to the Humble.* (James 4.) 'Twas Humility rais'd the blessed Virgin Mary to the most eminent Dignity of being Mother of God; her self has laid it: It was a profound Humility that justify'd the Publican: 'Twas the Humility of the Son of God that redeem'd the World: It is Humility fills Heaven with glorious Saints, How great should we be, did we humble ourselves!

Nothing can contribute more to the Tranquility of a Soul, than an humble Heart. Do the Waves of Temptation swell very high? Humility calms them: Does a corrupt World lay its Baits? Humility flies them: Does the Devil tempt us with his insinuating Artifices? Humility defeats him. It hearkens not to the Demands of Pride or Vain-glory; it matters not the Insults of wicked Men; it rejoices in Poverty; it receives Afflictions with a submissive Patience; nothing can come amiss to the humble Heart.

O! how ought we to bless our bountiful God, in affording us daily Opportunities of saving our Souls by the Practice of this Virtue! It may be, we have not an eminent

Gift

Gift of Prayer, let us *bumble* ourselves then : Perhaps we are not able to fast, or give an Alms, but we may *bumble* ourselves : Our repeated Sins and daily Failings, our Insufficiency in every thing, our uncertain Eternity, every serious Thought of our Lives, afford us fresh Occasions of *humbling* ourselves.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain an *bumble Heart*. It is a Sacrifice the most acceptable to God, and beneficial to your Souls. The Purchase may be difficult ; and that very Difficulty ought justly to *bumble* you. How perfectly *bumble* were the Saints ! they desir'd to be contemn'd by a deceitful World.

11th Day. On the Character of an *bumble Christian*.

REFLECTION IV.

THE *bumble Christian* has always a very mean Opinion of himself : He has ever before his Eyes his Weakness and his Misery : The Consideration of his past Offences make up his Morning Thoughts : His Insufficiency in every thing is his daily Meditation : The Uncertainty of his future State is his Evening Recollection, and closes his Eyes to Sleep. He is fully persuaded that the severest Racks, the Loss of Friends and Goods, the blackest Calumnies, and most exasperating Provocations, fall far short of

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what he deserves : Hence he receives the greatest of Chastisements with a patient Resignation : He suffers all in the deepest Silence of a joyful Heart : Far from Complaints, he cries out with *Micah*, *I will bear the Indignation of my God, because I have sinn'd against him.* (Mic. 7.) Is it so with us ? We have been Sinners ; and are we thus resign'd under the Appointments of Heaven ? Do we not murmur at Providence ? Are we not impatient under the smallest Trials ?

The humble Christian never thinks ill of his Neighbour : He acknowledges himself the most unworthy of Men, and therefore is he not concern'd to see others above him : He never speaks of his Neighbour's Defects, because he often thinks on his own. I fear we are not of these humble Sentiments : On the contrary, don't we eagerly grasp at the vain Applauses of Men ? Don't we speak of our Neighbour's Failings ? Don't we think ourselves above him in many respects, and sometimes envy his better Fortune ? Let us put it to our Consciences.

The humble Christian even desires to be despised ; because the more he is so, the greater are the Opportunities of improving his Humility : Hence he avoids all Occasions of Praise, in Imitation of his Divine Master, and is never troubled but when he meets them : Alas ! how much do we want of this Humility.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to conform to this blessed Character. Offer up some Prayer every Day in order to effect it. Say with St. Augustin; *Take, O Lord, from me the Spirit of Pride, and give me the Treasure of thy Humility.*

12th Day. On Meekness.

REFLECTION.

THERE are two Kinds of *Meekness*; one regards ourselves, the other our Neighbour. We are *meek to ourselves*, when we gently suppress, or quietly submit to our natural Imperfections: We are *meek to our Neighbour*, when we forgive all Injuries from our Hearts, and do Good for Evil. Every Disciple of *Jesus Christ* is bound to practise this *twofold Meekness*; and do we do it? Are we *mild to ourselves*, when we fret and vex at our unavoidable Weaknesses? When we are in a Passion at ourselves upon every Oversight and Indiscretion? Alas! these Uneasinesses cannot be the Effects of a *meek Heart*. Are we *mild to our Neighbour*, when we are murdering his Reputation by repeated *Calumnies*, when we are doing Violence to his Goods or Person? Are we *mild to our Neighbour*, while we rip up his Imperfections, aggravate his Failings, and rashly censure his most innocent Actions? No,

these are certain Marks not of a meek, but an uncharitable Soul.

Learn of me, says our dearest Lord, because I am meek, and bumble of Heart. (Mat. 11.) Let us learn his Meekness in the Manger, and under the Roof of Mary : Let us learn his Meekness through the Course of his Mission, and on the Mount of Calvary : He was led as a Sheep to the Slaughter, not opening his Mouth, (Isaiah 53.) he was meek for our Example.

O Jesus, grant me the Grace of Meekness. I am assur'd it is a Virtue the most grateful to Thee, and advantageous to myself. I know that *blessed are the meek;* (Mat. 5.) and only they shall possess the Land, the Land of the Living.

Examine yourselves, and earnestly sue for the Grace of *Meekness*: It is the Gift of God, and must come from him. Bridle your Passions ; be affable to every one ; receive your Sufferings with a *peaceable Mind*: In time of *Tranquility* labour to make such Provision of this *Virtue*, as may be your Security against all ensuing Storms.

13th Day. On Poverty.

REFLECTION.

THE Son of God from Eternity possesses in Heaven the unspeakable Riches of his Glory ; yet because *Poverty* is not there,

he

be must leave them all, at least in Appearance, to cloath himself in the Habit of a poor Man. How great a Value does he set upon Poverty, tho' so much detested by a wicked World! He was born in Poverty, he liv'd in Poverty, and he dy'd in Poverty, not having a Place to rest his Head on. (Mat. 8.) His Conversation was with the Poor; he chose them for his Apostles; he made them the happy Instruments of the World's Conversion.

We are Christians, and do we imitate the Poverty of Christ? It was his voluntary Choice; and is it ours? Let us be ashamed to see the God of Heaven and Earth in the Habit of a poor Man; while we, Dust and Ashes, are magnifying ourselves, and lavishing away in Vanity the Bread of Widows and crying Orphans; while we have our Hearts on Riches, and cannot feel the Want of them, but with the utmost Impatience. This is not to imitate the Poverty of Christ. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit:* (Mat. 5.) They are truly so, both in this World and in the World to come. They are blessed here; because free from those Cares, which are perpetual Stings to a Heart fix'd on Riches: They are blessed in Heaven; because to them appertains that glorious Kingdom.

Sweet Jesus, grant us a true Christian Poverty: We know it to be acceptable to thy Divine Goodness, and of great Benefit to our Souls: We know that they, who would be

be rich, fall into Temptation, and the Snare of the Devil. (1 Tim. 6.)

Examine yourselves, and labour to obtain this necessary Virtue: To be *really* poor by *Choice*, is a Gospel Counsel to the most perfect: But to be poor in *Spirit*, is an universal Duty. If you are blessed with Plenty, relieve the Poor, and possess what you have as if you had it not. (2 Cor. 6.) If you are poor by *Condition*, be contented with your Lot, resigning yourselves to the Will of Providence, which liberally provides for the vilest Creatures. You must be *poor* on Earth, if you would be *rich* in Heaven.

14th Day. On Chastity.

R E F L E C T I O N .

CHASTITY is the Lilly of Virtues; it equals us to Angels: *Chastity*, says St. Jerome, *has its Martyrdom*: And truly the worst of Punishments are not harder to overcome, than the violent Attacks made against it: How many have been subdued by *Impurity*, who could not be overthrown by the sharpest Torments? Let us then preserve the rich *Treasure* of *Chastity*; it is the fairest Virtue of Soul and Body.

We must be *chaste* before we can think of inheriting *Heaven*: None but the *clean* of Heart shall dwell in those Tabernacles; nothing defil'd can enter there: (Rev. 20.) There's

no

no room for *Impurity* committed in Thought, Word, or Deed; there's no room for *unchaste Desires*, or *Wicked Company*; their *Habitation* is in *everlasting Flames*. *Blessed are the clean of Heart*; (Mat. 5.) only they shall possess God in a happy Eternity.

Christians, we want not *Motives* to excite in us a Love of this necessary Virtue. The whole *Life of Christ* is an astonishing Example of a consummate Chastity. His Blessed Mother sets an incomparable Lesson of perfect Purity. The glorious *Martyrs* laying down their Lives, the *Virgins* and *Confessors* retiring into Wildernesses, and immuring themselves to preserve their *Chastity*, are speaking *Motives* to induce us to a Practice of it.

Examine yourselves, and let it be your chiefest Concern to purchase and preserve this *Angelicall Virtue*. In order thereto, set a guard upon your Senses, and particularly your Eyes; shun all Occasions of Sin, and chiefly bad Company; be fervent in Prayer, attentive to the Word of God, and frequent the Sacraments: On *pure Spirits* God only rests, and they eternally in him.

15th Day. On Modesty.

R E F L E C T I O N.

MOESTY is three-fold; as it regards our *Words*, *Dress*, and *Carriage*. We observe a Modesty in our *Words*, when we let

let fall nothing of *Evil* or *Impertinence*; when we speak but *little*, and in due Circumstances of Time and Place: We observe a Modesty in *Dress*, when we affect no *Vanity*, and decently cloath ourselves according to our Condition: We are modest in *Behaviour*, when we avoid Curiosity, and all irregular Gestures; when we restrain our Looks, and are courteous to every-body. Is our Comportment such? Do we labour to obtain this pleasing *Virtue*? We ought to do so: *Let your Modesty*, says St. Paul, *be known to all Men.* (Phil. 4.)

No Words make that Impression on the Heart, as does the Force of Example: *Come*, (said Francis of Assissum to one of his Brethren) *Come, let us go and preach*; he went forth upon it, and after he had walked about the Town for a while, he returned home: *Father*, said the Brother, *why did we not preach?* *We have done it*, answer'd the Saint, by our modest Behaviour and serious Looks; we have preach'd by *Example* much more effectually than we cou'd have done by Words. Let us, like this *Saint*, edify our Neighbour by a *modest Life*; 'tis unknown what good Effects it will have upon him.

The blessed *Virgin Mary* is the Patroness of Modesty: She was, says St. Ambrose, *humble of Heart, grave in Discourse, of a prudent Mind, and few Words*: There was nothing sour in her Looks, provoking in her Words, or indecent in her Actions; her Gestures were not unbecoming

becoming her, nor her Mien loose; the Modesty of her Body gave a certain Demonstration of that of her Soul. Let us beg her Prayers to partake of it.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain a Christian Modesty: In order thereto shun light airy Company, and let your Conversation be with the Modest. What a Comfort will it be to you in your last Hour, to have concur'd to the Salvation of Souls by your modest Lives! So let your Light shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven. (Mat. 5.)

16th Day. On Obedience to God.

REFLECTION I.

OBEDIENCE is a Sacrifice so very acceptable to God, that all the *Holocausts* of the Old Law could never equal it. Abraham never offer'd so grateful a Victim, as when he readily obey'd the Voice of Heaven in sacrificing his Son; nor the Apostles, as when, in Obedience to the Call of Christ, they immediately left all and follow'd him. True it is, *Obedience is better than Sacrifice.*

(1 Kings 15.)

The Sun obey'd Joshua, and stood still for a whole Day: The Earth obey'd Moses, and swallow'd up alive Corah and his Adherents: The Sea obey'd him, when he and his Army march'd safely through it: The Rain obey'd Elijah,

Elijah, and Fire also, consuming the two Companies of fifty Men each : The Devils obey'd the Apostles, and wild Beasts the Holy Fathers of the Desart : All Creatures are made to obey and serve us ; and shall we only not obey the God who made both us and them ? Lord, command what thou wilt, I will obey thee : Thou hast commanded me to love thee with my whole Soul, and I will obey thee ; thou hast commanded me to love my Neighbour as myself, I will obey.

Christians, let us do so ; let us submit our Reason to the divine Truths ; let us subject our Wills to the Will of God, and be directed by it in all we do : By this Light we shall never err ; with this Guide we shall never stray ; with this Comforter we shall never be dejected ; with this Encourager never be confounded. We must either obey God or the Devil.

Examine yourselves, and let the Course of your Lives be a constant Obedience to the Will of God : Remember it is a Virtue the most acceptable to him, it being a Sacrifice of your Will and Hearts : Therefore be very punctual in all your Duties, and be ever mindful of those of your Calling. Slight not small Faults ; but always remembering they displease God, apply your utmost Endeavours against 'em.

17th Day. On Obedience to Superiors.

REFLECTION II.

OBEDIENCE is a Virtue of an universal Extent; it obliges Christians under all Professions to a Practice of it: We must obey God in carefully fulfilling even the least of his Commandments; we must obey the Church in Matters of Faith; we must obey the King, Parents, Pastors, and Superiors, and all those higher Powers the Divine Goodness has placed over us, as we shall otherwise answer the Neglect thereof at the Tribunal of his Justice. *He that bears you, bears me; he that despises you, despises me.* (Luke 10.)

The Life of Christ is an excellent Example of a consummate Obedience to superior Powers. He was always obedient to his Father; he came into the World to fulfil his Will; (Psalm 39.) Father, not my Will, but thine be done. (Mat. 26.) He had rather die than not be obedient: For thirty Years he lived in Obedience to his Mother and St. Joseph, he was subject to them. Who? says St. Bernard, God; to whom? to Men: He, whom the Powers of Heaven obey, was subject to Mary; learn therefore Man to obey, Earth learn to be subject, learn Dust to submit. Subjects, learn to obey your King, Christians your Pastors, Children your Parents, Servants your Masters. Do we imitate this Obedience of our Saviour, when we are ever murmuring at the Commands of Superiors,

Superiors, and seldom obey but by mere Force?

Our greatest Happiness in this Life is to be obedient to those whom God has placed over us. Tell me not the obedient Christian is gall'd with Envy, Anger or Impatience; tell me not of his Discontents: No, these are the just Punishments of a *disobedient Heart*. The *Obedient* are meek, chaste, humble; they are the only good Christians.

Examine yourselves, and resolve to practise this *Obedience* to Superiors; it is the Mother of Virtue: Obey them readily without Demur, cheerfully without Murmuring, and in every thing that is not contrary to the Law of God.

18th Day. *On blind Obedience.*

REFLECTION III.

BLIND *Obedience* is not a Submission to the Will of Superiors in Matters against Conscience; but a ready and cheerful Subjection to them, in what is not manifestly contrary to the Law of God. Do we practise this *Obedience*, when we are so often fretting at their Commands? Ever reasoning the Case, or disputing the Matter before we will comply? No; if we think of purchasing this humble Virtue, we must make a Sacrifice of our *Will* and *Reason*, and take for our only Guide the *Will of God*.

Our

Our Will and Understanding both are so cruelly wounded by original Sin, that there is an absolute Necessity of their being govern'd and directed. The Way to Heaven is so very narrow, that 'tis impossible to go along it without a *Guide*. How many have tumbled into the Pit of Hell, because they would have no Guide but their *weak selves* ! Happy is the *blindly obedient Soul* ! She is embark'd in a Vessel where she may sleep secure : She need not fear her arriving safe to her wish'd-for Port, when *Jesus Christ* sits at the Helm : *Let us go where we will, we shall find no Rest, but in an humble Subjection to the Government of a Superior.* (*Kempis.*)

O God, give me this *bumble Spirit*. Let me reason as I please, the *best* of Reason must be to *obey thy Will*. I know there is not a more sovereign Balsam for my wounded Conscience, than an *entire Subjection* to the Guidance of my Director : 'Tis this will encourage my fearful Soul, and put me in the way of possessing thee, my God.

Examine yourselves, and, the more readily to practise this Lesson of Obedience, consider every Superior as the *Vicegerent of Jesus Christ* : Mind not their Faults, but their Authority over you : Examine not their Reasons, but submit to them as your *Judges* : Should *Christ* in Person bid you do a thing, you would immediately obey him ; and why not Superiors, when their Authority is derived from that of *Christ* ?

19th Day. On Prudence
REFLECTION I.

Christian Prudence is to seek God in all Things. It may well be styled a Cardinal Virtue, when the eternal Welfare of our Souls depends upon it. To disengage our Affections from Creatures, to bear Afflictions with a true Resignation, to fix our Hearts on God, to labour for the Possession of him, to consider him as the End of all our Actions, to esteem the World Dross to gain Christ; these are the happy Effects of Christian Prudence.

Lord, give me this Virtue; I know that having it I cannot fail of being for ever happy. With it, shall I set a due Contempt upon the World; with it, shall I improve every Circumstance of Life, in order to Eternity; without it, I shall be a Slave to everlasting Chains. *Lord, let me know myself and Thee.* St. Augustin.

Let us look into the Christian World, and see how eagerly it grasps at fading Goods: How does it contrive, solicit, watch, and labour for mere Smoke? What Pains does the Merchant take for a little Dust? And shail not we do as much for Heaven? Is it Prudence to toil for the Convenience of a few Years, and leave Eternity to the Hazard? True it is, *The Children of this*

this World are more prudent than the Children of Light in their Generation. (Luke 16.)

Examine yourselves, and beg of God the Virtue of Prudence, that whatever you do may be done for him. There can be no true Wisdom but in seeking God. Always remember the End for which you were created; and that to swerve from this End, is to run counter to Faith and Reason. In all your sufferings be still resigned to the Will of Providence: Let it be your Study to know yourselves.

20th Day. On Justice.

REFLECTION II.

JUSTICE is twofold; it regards God, and our Neighbour. We are just to God, when we render him the Homage due to his Majesty; when we are thankful for the Favours he has bestow'd on us; when we heartily repent for past Transgressions, and make the best Reparation we are able for them: And have we done so? We are just to God, when we carefully walk in his Holy Commandments; when we perform all our Actions with that due Regard, as if each of them were to be the last of our Lives: Is this our Behaviour? Lord, direct my steps, that no Injustice may rule over me. (Psalms 118.) Let my Heart be on thee, let my Affections be guided by thee, let thy Will

be mine, and let all my Works be level'd at thy Glory.

We are *Just* to our *Neighbour*, when we make this Principle, *Do as you would be done by*, the Golden Rule of our Lives : And is it our Rule ? Don't we injure our *Neighbour* in his Goods, or Person ? Have we never slander'd him, judg'd rashly of him, rejoiced at his Misfortunes, reaped up his Failings, nor misconstrued his innocent and even pious Actions ? All this is *unjust*.

Christians, let us not be so *unjust* to our *Neighbour* : Let us suspend all rash judging, let us always speak well of him, tho' an Enemy ; let us congratulate him in his Prosperity ; let us condole with him under Affliction ; let us defend his Innocence, excuse his Failings, and lay aside all Dislikes ; let us live in Peace and Amity with him. Has not *Christ* done so ? Has he not commanded us to do so ? Are not our Neighbours redeemed by his *Blood* ? And are they not our own *Fleſh* ?

Examine yourselves, and in your most fervent Prayers petition for this necessary Virtue of *Justice* both to God and Man. Convince yourselves that there can be no Hopes of Happiness without the Practice of it. *As God is just, so he loves Justice.* (Ps. 10.) None but the *Just* shall live for ever. (Wisd. 5.)

21st Day. *On Fortitude.*

REFLECTION III.

Sampson and David had both Strength enough to tear Lions in pieces ; yet they wanted true *Fortitude*, because they could not overcome themselves. A great many Christians have the *Courage* to fast, watch, and chastise their Bodies with Disciplines and Hair-Shirts ; and yet too often fall a Prey to Sin. Alas ! how many have endured *Prisons*, who could not hold out against the soft Allurements of sinful Pleasures ? How many have fallen by the Hand of a *Dalilah*, who contemned that of the bloodiest Executioner ! And had these *true Courage* ? No ; to command our own Hearts ; to defeat the Artifices of Pride, Luxury, Envy, and Vain-glory ; this is the most perfect and heroic *Fortitude*. Better is he who commands his Soul, than he that conquers Cities. (Prov. 16.).

Nothing is able to shock the courageous Christian ; like a Rock he stands immovable to all Winds and Tempests ; he is neither scared with the Storms of Adversity, nor puffed up in a Calm of Peace ; his Care is to subject himself to the Will of God in every Particular ; and there is his Victory.

This *Fortitude* it is that crown'd so many glorious Saints in Heaven. How can we think of dying with a *Stephen*, or a *Laurence* upon the Gridiron, when we watch not over

our Hearts, nor retrench Self-love, nor check our Passions ; but are ever plying under the least Temptation ? Shall we be able to bear the Sword, when we start back at the Point of a Needle ? Lord, give me this *strengthening Grace of Fortitude*, that my *Enemy may never prevail over me* : Without it I am nothing ; with it shall I be enabled to fight thy Battles, and upon all Occasions assert thy Cause, without being *afraid or ashamed of the World's Reproaches*.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to obtain this *noble Virtue*. Desire the blessed *Saints*, who always carry about them the bright Marks of their *Courage*, to join their Prayers with you for this end. *Put on the Armour of God, that you may stand your ground against the Snares of the Devil.* (Ephes. 6.) Always remember that to *overcome yourselves is the greatest Fortitude.* St. Ambrose.

22d Day. On Temperance.

REFLECTION IV.

Temperance is a *Moderation* in whatever relates to Soul or Body : It is a Virtue so necessary, that there is no going to Heaven without it. As many Ways as our corrupt Nature is subject to *Excess*, so many is Temperance absolutely necessary to keep it within bounds. What Numbers of Christians exceed

ceed in Diet, Sleep, and Cloathing ! How many thus make *Gods of their Bellies*, and Idols of themselves ! How many, with the rich *Glutton*, damn themselves by a brutish Intemperance ! Is not *Temperance* here indispensably necessary, in order to moderate these criminal Extravagances ?

Our Hearts are very subject to evil Thoughts, and our Tongues to *Excess*, by Lying, Detracting, Swearing, Cursing, and a thousand other Ways ; and can we fix better Limits to them, than what *Temperance* prescribes ? that is, *when, where, how much, in what manner, and to what end* to speak. Let us earnestly pray for this great Virtue.

It is *Temperance* must heal the Pride, Blindness, and all the Distempers of our Understanding. 'Tis *Temperance* must check, and confine within Bounds, the exorbitant Passions and Desires of our Hearts : 'Tis *Temperance* must bring us to a serene State of Mind, and make us happy both in this World and the next. O God, bestow upon me this rich Treasure ; I know it is what thy *Saints* admired and always carried about them.

Examine yourselves, and by a fervent Prayer, by a due Watch over your Hearts, and by keeping a *Mean* in every Action of your Lives, labour in the Purchase of this *Cardinal Virtue* : Let not *Excess* but *Necessity* be your Guide. In all the interior and spiritual Exercises of your Souls, let *Temperance* be

your Rule. Thus will you obtain a peaceable Heart, the only Means of advancing in a devout Life.

23d Day. On the Presence of God.

REFLECTION I.

GOD is every-where ; he is in the midst of us, in the Center of our Hearts ; and have we known it ? His adorable Eye always beholds us ; our Words, Works, and very Thoughts, all the Secrets of our Hearts are open to him ; and do we think of it ? Alas ! did we so, it were impossible we should dare rebel against him.

What ! offend our great and bountiful God, and in his *Presence* too, where the Seraphims in profound Adoration prostrate at his Feet ! It would be Death to upbraid our Prince to his Face ; and can it be less than everlasting Death thus to affront our God ? We are ashame'd to sin before the Eyes of Men ; and have we no Regard to the *Presence* of God, who is the Party offended, and can in the very Moment bind us fast in eternal Chains ? Suffer me not, O God, thus blindly to presume, and ungratefully offend thy sovereign Majesty : Let thy *Divine Presence* be ever before my Eyes, and deeply rooted in my Heart, that I may never dare to displease thee more.

Christians,

Christians, find out a Place where God can't see you, and you shall have Leave to sin : But where will that be ? Alas ! wherever we are, he beholds the Pride and Vanity of our Souls ; he sees our Impurities ; he sees our Slothfulness, and all the Malice of our Hearts. What shall we have to answer for in the Day of Judgment, when not a Circumstance of Life can be possibly hid from our future Judge.

Examine yourselves, and always remember that God beholds you. Whenever the Devil shall tempt you to sin, let this be your Fence; Sinner, God beholds thee. With this Weapon, Joseph and Susanna maintain'd their Chastity. Place it then always before your Eyes ; fix it on your Doors, and in your Hearts ; Sinner, God beholds thee.

24th Day. On the Presence of God.

REFLECTION IX.

WE need not go far to find our God ; he is always with us ; in him we live, move, and have our Being. (Acts 17.) He is with us, to inspire us with his secret Graces ; he accompanies us in our Afflictions, that we may bear them with Patience ; he is with us in all Temptations, for our greater Encouragement ; he holds a Crown over our Heads, that we may be sure to conquer. Do we reflect on these Truths ? Do we fight with Courage as

as if we saw our God stand by us? are we as ready to concur with him, as he is with us? To our very Shame we cannot say it.

God is *in us* also: By his Divinity and Power he is united to our Being, and by his Grace he resides within our Hearis. Now are we a fit *Habitation* for such a glorious Guest? Are our Souls furnish'd with good Works and Christian Virtues? Or rather, are they not still cold and languishing? 'Tis much to be fear'd they are. For shame! let us not entertain our God after so vile a Rate: Since he *dwells* in us, let us seek no Refuge but in *him alone*.

O my God, is it possible thou should'st so often think on me, and I so seldom on thee! That thou should'st be perpetually by me, and I never regard thee! That thou should'st do so much for me, and I do nothing for thee! Ah! quicken me with thy Grace, that I may no more be liable to so black an Ingratitude. *Live, Lord, in whose Sight I stand.* (2 Kings 17.)

Examine yourselves, and ever remembering that God is *in you* and *with you*, never offend him by the least Sin. By a virtuous Life qualify yourselves for his blessed Company. Follow his Directions, obey his Orders, and fail not to consult with him in all your Concerns. Pray with Jeremiah; *Thou, O Lord, art in us, and thy Name is invok'd upon us, leave us not.* (Jer. 14.)

25th Day. *On the Presence of God.*

REFLECTION III.

THE Bliss of Heaven consists in *seeing God*; and our *Happiness* here on Earth is in *walking* in his *Presence*. The Angels, tho' upon Duty, have their *Eyes* on God; so in all our Affairs ought we to *think of him*. The *Presence of God* is the best Remedy against Sin, for thousands perish through a Forgetfulness of him: It is the greatest Step to Perfection; *Walk before me, and thou shalt be perfect.* (Gen. 17.) Let us do so; let us say with *David*; *Lord, I will fasten my Eyes upon thee.* (Psalm 31.)

Some Christians there are, who imagine they *see* their God standing by them, walking with them, and taking a Review of all their Actions: Others fancy they *see Christ* naked in the Manger; others, that they *see* him bleeding in the Garden, or dying on the Cross. St. *Bernard* and *Bonaventure*, and many other Saints chose their Dwelling-place in the Wounds of their Saviour; and all this to enjoy his *Presence*. Is this our Practice? What way soever it be, let us firmly believe that *our God beholds us.*

My Soul, where art thou? Canst thou reflect thou art in the *Presence* of thy Lord, and still make him no *Tender* of Love? Where are thy pious Ejaculations? *O God, incline unto my Aid, and make haste to help me.* (Ps. 69.)

Lord,

*Lord, what wilt thou have me do? (Acts 9.)
Not my Will, but thine be done. (Luke 22.)
What have I in Heaven, and what besides thee,
would I have on Earth? O the God of my Heart,
and my Portion for ever. (Psalm 72.)*

Examine yourselves, and be very constant in this pious Exercise. The better to preserve your lively Presence of God, meditate often, pray much, and offer up all your Actions to the Divine Glory. Repute the Time lost, wherein you walk not in the Presence of God: What's more easy than to think on him? what more comfortable? when thus you may possess a Heaven upon Earth.

26th Day. On the Benefit of our Creation,

REFLECTION I.

SOME Years past we were not in the World, but laid cover'd in the dark Shades of Nothing: God by his mere Goodness drew us out of this Nothing, having no need at all of us. He has given us a Being the noblest in the World, capable of inheriting everlasting Glory: He has given us a Soul like to himself; having endow'd it with an Understanding to know him, a Memory to think of him, and a Will to love him: And are we thankful for these great Favours? He has beautify'd us with a Body perfect in its Senses, and exactly well proportion'd in all its Members; and do we not make it an Instrument of

of Offence? Let us not be so very ungrateful! The brute Beasts will rise in Judgment against us, and condemn us at the Bar.

Why has God made us what we are? Why did he not form us to the Likeness of a Stone, Plant, or Beast? Why has he call'd us out of the Abyss of Nothing, and left so many thousands behind, who have as good a Title to *Creation* as ourselves? Why are we not like some of our Neighbours, blind, lame, mad, and foolish? Only his *Love* can tell us.

O bountiful *Creator*! my *Heart* and my All I consecrate to thee, who art the Author of it. What *Return* can I make, for that thou hast drawn me out of Nothing, and through thy infinite Mercy made me what I am? Never will I wander from thee by Sin, each Action of my Life shall express thy Praises.

Examine yourselves, and make the best *Return* you are able for this Benefit of your *Creation*. The *End* of your *Creation* is to *serve* God; be therefore punctual in it. Take care you make not the Divine Gifts the *Instruments* of Sin, and of your own Damnation. Under all Temptations, let this be your Shield: *Dust and Ashes, what art thou a-doing?* O very Nothing, dar'st thou Sin?

27th Day. On the Benefit of our Preservation.

REFLECTION II.

BY Creation God gave us a Being; and by Preservation he maintains this Being. We have so necessary a Dependance on him, that should he withdraw his preserving Hand, we must absolutely fall into our original Nothing. The Light depends not so much upon the Sun, as we do on God. See, my Soul, how thy God has protected thee, from the Day of thy Conception to this present Moment; see how he follow'd thee when thou fled'st from him, and how meekly he bore with thee, when thou didst ungratefully offend him to thy own Destruction. Make him an amends by giving him thy Heart; he desires no more.

Alas! we cannot breathe, nor stir a Hand, nor think, nor do the least thing without the Help of God: *In him we live, move, and be.* (Acts 17.) From how many Evils does his Love protect us every Moment of our Lives! How comes it we are not blind, mad, and leprous, as many in the World are? Why are we not cut off by some sudden or untimely Death, as great Numbers are? why are we not overwhelm'd with Poverty and Affliction, and deprived of the Conveniences of human Life? Christians! it is the Divine Goodness which has happily preserved us from these

Misfor-

Misfortunes. Ah! *What Return shall I make?*
(*Psalm 115.*)

Consider the Frame of the World; look up at the Sun, Moon, Stars, the Heavens; view the Birds of the Air, the Beasts of the Field, the Fishes of the Sea: These has God created for our *Preservation*. Nor is this all; the Blessed Angels, those *ministring Spirits*, are ordain'd to serve us. *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him?* (*Psalm 8.*)

Examine yourselves, and take care you abuse not this Benefit of your *Conservation*. So great it is, that it may well be stil'd a *perpetual Creation*. Make a suitable Return of your *Hearts* for it: Your loving *God* calls for no more: *Son, give me thy Heart.* (*Prov. 23.*)

28th Day. *On the Benefit of our Redemption.*

R E F L E C T I O N III.

THE Slavery the *Israelites* underwent in *Egypt*, and their Captivity in *Babylon*, was very great; and yet but *light*, if compar'd to the oppressing Slavery of *Sin*. Under this *Slavery* the *World* had groan'd about four thousand Years: The Faith of *Abraham*, the Meekness of *Moses*, the Penance of *David*, the Tears of *Jeremiah*, were not enough to pay our Ransom: Only *God* could set us free, and he has abundantly done it.

My

My Soul, where art thou? Art thou not in Extasies of Love and Admiration at so bright a Mercy? What would have become of thee, had not thy Lord thus mercifully redeem'd thee? Suppose thou wert a *Traitor* to thy temporal Prince, and as such being condemn'd to a cruel *Death*, thy Prince out of Kindness should suffer for thee; what wouldst thou think? Be then amazed to see thy offended *God* turn'd thy Advocate, and out of his pure *Love* washing off thy Sins with his Sacred Blood. Thy Lord could have redeem'd thee with a *Thought* or a *Word*, as by a *Word* he created thee; but that would not suffice him: No, he must become Man, and a poor, afflicted, and contemn'd Man; he must be scourg'd, pierced with Thorns, buffeted, spit upon, forsaken by his best Friends, and bleed and die upon a Cross for thee. O happy *Fault of Adam*, which has deserved such and so great a *Redeemer!*

Christians, these are mighty Favours, and are we grateful for them? Can we do too much for him, who has wip'd off our Sins; who has freed us from the Slavery of the Devil and of Hell? who has made us the Sons of God, and Heirs of Heaven; the Partakers of his Grace, and of all spiritual Gifts; who has comforted us with *Sacraments*, and has admitted us to the Table of his own dear *Self*? Can we do too much for so liberal a *Benefactor*? No, *Thus is there with him a plentiful Redemption.* (Psalm 129.)

Examine

Examine yourselves, and by repeated Acts of Love, Thanksgiving, Adoration and Praise, make some Return for this great Blessing. Often meditate on it: Hear Mass devoutly: Never crucify again your Lord by Sin; but rememb'ring that you are bought with a great Price, glorify and carry your God about you. (Psalm 129.)

29th Day. *On the Benefit of our Vocation.*

REFLECTION IV.

God has not only redeem'd us, he has likewise call'd us to his true Faith. What a Mercy is this, that we alone should be call'd, while so many thousands are left in Infidelity! How unhappy should we have been, had we known no other God, than those of Stocks and Stones! Let us bless our Lord, who, out of his infinite Love, has call'd us by Name to his admirable Light: Let us never give occasion to those Infidel Souls of upbraiding us with Ingratitude.

What vast Numbers also of the Christian World are led away with Heresy! And are we not of that Number? No, we are brought up in the Bosom of the true Church; we are fed with the pure Milk of the Apostles; we are fill'd with the Blood of Jesus Christ. My Soul, what hast thou done to deserve this Favour? Again, how many Souls fall a Prey

to Sin! How many fall, and never rise more! Is this thy Case? True it is thou hast criminally offended, and often relapsed into thy former Sins; but thy God has borne with thee, and has raised thee up by a sincere Repentance: Even now he encourages thee with his multiply'd Graces to fight and conquer that thou may'st be crown'd with Glory.

How rich is thy Heart, O God, in Mercy! Why hast thou call'd me to the true Faith, to thy Holy Sacraments, and to all the Treasures of the Church? Didst thou not know I should abuse them? Yes, but thy Design was Love.

Examine yourselves, and be confounded at your wretched Forgetfulness of God. Stifle not his Inspirations. By a Life of Humility, and other Virtues, make some Return for the Benefit of your Vocation. Often think with yourselves, how many lost Souls would have been Saints in Heaven, had they had your Call. *Woe to thee, Corozain; woe to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon those Mercies had been wrought, which have been done in you, long since they had done Penance in Sack-cloth and Ashes.* (Mat. 11.)

30th Day.

30th Day. On Perseverance.

REFLECTION.

*P*erseverance to the End is the Accomplishment of Virtue; it is the Reward of our Labours; 'tis the Seed of Glory. *H*e that perseveres to the End shall be saved. (Mat. 10.) The blessed Saints who are now reigning in Heaven would never have been there, had they not persever'd in the Service of God. What was Judas the better for being call'd to the Apostleship, when for want of Perseverance he died in Despair?

The good Confessions we have made; the Body and Blood of Jesus we have so often received; our penitential Tears, and liberal Alms; our fervent Prayers, and rigorous Self-denials, will avail us little, if not accompany'd with the Grace of Perseverance: No, we shall die in our Sins, and be lost for ever. Will a promising Crop be any Comfort to the Farmer, if his Corn be destroy'd before the Harvest?

Lord, since thou hast been so merciful as to create me to thy Likeness, to preserve my Being, to redeem me with thy Blood, to call me to the true Faith, and to give me all Opportunities of saving my Soul, let not these Mercies be bestow'd in vain. I detest all Sin: Let a sincere Repentance close my dying Eyes. I want no fresh Encouragement to persevere in

thy Service: I have for my Reward the Promise of Heaven, the Promise of that Bliss which can never enter here the Heart of Man.

Examine yourselves, and fail not to offer up your hearty Prayers for the obtaining Perseverance. Daily renew your good Resolution of living well. In order thereto, meditate often, frequent the Sacraments, read pious Books, and consider every Day as if it were the last of your Lives. No one will be crown'd, that has not persever'd in the Combat (2 Tim. 2.)

A N
APPENDIX
 O F
Practical Reflections
 F O R
DAYS of OBLIGATION.

JANUARY, First Day.

On the Circumcision of our Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N I.

OUR blessed Redeemer, when but eight Days old, was *circumcised* according to the *Jewish Law*. What, our Saviour circumcised ! Does the *immaculate Lamb* of God stoop to the humbling Ceremony of Circumcision ! When I find my Saviour born an Infant Child, I behold and wonder; when I see him barbarously treated by the *Jews*, dying upon a Cross, I wonder more; tho' I very well know *Innocence* may suffer: But when I find him like a miserable *Delinquent*, lying under the *Knife* of *Circumcision*, what

can I think ! Dearest Saviour ! there is nothing more odious to thee than Sin ; thou cam'st to redeem the World from Sin, and wilt thou be liable to the Infamy of a *Sinner* ?

Our Saviour is *circumcised* : Christians, let us circumcise our *Hearts* by retrenching Sin by cutting off all immediate Occasions of Sin by bridling our Passions, and by a vigorous Opposition to the corrupt Inclinations of Nature.

Our Saviour is *circumcised* : O unparalleled Example of the most profound *Humility*. Have we not, poor Worms, reason to be humbled at the Sight of our Sins ? How do we take the Injuries and Reproaches we meet with in the World ? 'Tis certain we are *Sinners*, and are we willing to be reputed such ? Our Saviour is *circumcised* : O rarest Pattern of most perfect *Obedience* ! Do we answer the Obligations of our respective Callings ? Are we *obedient* to Superiors ? Do we strictly observe the Commands of God and his Holy Church ?

Examine yourselves, and see how far you have practised these necessary Lessons, your blessed *Original* teaches you in his *Circumcision*. The *New Year* is begun ; begin to renew a good Life with it : *Cast off the Works of Darkness, and put on the Armour of Light.* (Rom. 13.) Humbly ask this Grace of your sweetest Saviour : He can deny you nothing, when he is *circumcised* for our Transgressions.

2d Day. *On the Name of Jesus.*

REFLECTION II.

He that humbles himself shall be exalted. (Mat. 23.) Christ in his Circumcision humbled himself to the lowest Degree imaginable, to the Degree of a Sinner; and therefore is he exalted, and blessed with the adorable Name of Jesus: A Name! at the Sound whereof, Heaven, Earth, and Hell, shall bend their Knees: A Name of unspeakable Comfort to the Saints, and of Terror to the Devils: A Name, which implies the Redemption of Mankind, and the Happiness of Heaven.

Are we sore oppressed with the Scourge of Affliction? let us think on Jesus: *I will rejoice in God my Jesus.* (Habac. 3.) Are we subject to repeated Failings? let Jesus be our Comfort: *Sweet Jesus, comfort me.* Do our unruly Passions grow upon us? let us speedily check them with the Name of Jesus: *Dear Jesus, help me.* Are we assaulted by desperate Temptations? let us arm ourselves with the Name of Jesus: *O Jesus, save me.* Are we ready to sink under the Weight of our Offences? let us trust in the sacred Name of Jesus: *Good Jesus, for thy Name's Sake be to me a Jesus.*

What did Christ leave undone to compleat the Character of a Saviour? Was not every Action of his Life level'd at our Salvation?

Did not his Words and purest Thoughts concur to the same? Did he not labour Day and Night in the Conversion of Souls? Has he not shed his Blood for us? We are Christians; we received this honourable Distinction at our Baptism; and have we answer'd the Character?

Examine yourselves, and see what Benefit you have made of the Name of Jesus. Take care of profaning it: Engrave it upon your Hearts: Let it sweeten your Thoughts: Let every Prayer relish of Jesus: In your deepest Afflictions let Jesus be your Comfort. There is no other Name under Heaven given to Men, whereby they may be saved. (Acts 4.)

6th Day. On the Epiphany.

REFLECTION I.

JESUS Christ no sooner came into the World, but he thought of our Salvation. A Star appears to the Kings of the East, and announces the Birth of the World's Redeemer; out they set, resolved not to rest till they find their Saviour. *Happy Resolution!* God calls upon us every Moment of our Lives by a thousand Inspirations, and do we follow his Call?

In these three Kings are we call'd to the Faith. Great Princes, whither so fast? Reflect, you are upon a difficult and tedious Journey: Will you offer to proclaim a

new-

new-born King in the Court of a bloody and jealous Tyrant? Is not your Return very doubtful? Will you hazard the Loss of a Crown, Wife, Children, and all that's dear to you? Nothing could stay them: They boldly enter'd the Court of *Herod*, demanding where he was that was born King of the Jews. (Mat. 2.) Undaunted Courage! have we been half so zealous in finding out Heaven? I own we have sometimes good Resolutions; but does not almost every silly Humour and trifling Vanity put them by? We go not upon Uncertainties, but do very well know, that God is our Lord, and where he is to found; and have we the Courage to seek and serve him?

The three Kings are come to Bethlehem; and what do they find there? A Stable, a Manger, Straw, a poor Woman, a weeping Babe; nor are they surpris'd but falling on their Knees, they adore the Child; they acknowledge him their God, their King, and their Redeemer. Unshaken'd Faith! What is our Faith; has it not waver'd at Poverty? has it not ply'd under Persecution? is it a Faith working by Charity in *Jesus Christ*? Such a Faith will save us.

Examine yourselves, and in all Occurrences of Life, endeavour to imitate the *Faith*, *Courage*, and *Resolution* of the *Wise-Men*; so will you have a Part in this great Festival, the *Christmas-Day* of the *Gentiles*.

7th Day.

7th Day. On the Offerings of the three Kings.

REFLECTION II.

THE pious Kings were not at all scandaliz'd at the mean Condition of their *Jesus*: They had a lively Faith of his being their Lord: They saw under his Humility the brightest Glory; under his Feebleness an almighty Power: Upon the Spot they became *Christians*, and perfect *Christians* too. Alas! we were long ago called to *Christianity*; and yet how cold, how slothful, how imperfect are we!

Upon their bended Knees they adore their Saviour: They make him an early Offering of *Gold*, *Incense*, and *Myrrh*: They offer him *Gold*, in acknowledgment that he is their *King*: They present him with *Frankincense*, owning him to be their *God*: And with *Myrrh*, in token of his being a mortal *Man*. Has our Faith been so active? Does it break forth into good Works? *Lord, increase my Faith.* (Luke 17.)

Let us, with these good Princes, make a daily Offering to God of the *Gold* of *Charity*; let us *love him* with all our Hearts, and our *Neighbour* as ourselves; let us rather be prepar'd to die, than sin against him. Let us offer him the *Incense* of our *Prayers*; our manifold Weaknesses, the Enemies of our Souls, which on all Sides surround us, tell us

us we must pray. Let us not fail to offer him the *Myrrh* of *Penance*; our repeated Sins, the Justice of God, our eternal Happiness, call upon us to do *Penance*.

Examine yourselves, and let your Lives be a constant Oblation of *Gold*, *Incense*, and *Myrrh* to the *Infant Jesus*. On this Day were you call'd to the *Faith of Christ*: Do then your utmost in making a grateful Return for so great a Mercy: Pray for those Souls, that still remain in the Shades of Infidelity.

Practical Reflections

F O R

F E B R U A R Y , Second Day.

On the Purification of our Lady.

R E F L E C T I O N .

TH E Virgin *Mary* is Mother of *God*; and yet behold, in the Ceremony of this Day, *she* is willing to pass for an ordinary Mother of a *Man*. O profound *Humility*! Do we imitate her *Humility*, when our Hearts are full of *Pride*, and all our Actions are influenced by it? The Virgin *Mary*, tho' as *pure* as the Sun, yet enters the Temple to be purified more. O angelical *Chastity*! do we practise this her *Chastity*, when

when we lie under the Guilt of multiply'd Impurities, and in Thought, Word, and Deed offend against it? The Virgin *Mary* is not subject to the *Law*, because *she* always remains a *pure Virgin*; and yet see how chearfully *she* submits to it. O unparalleled *Obedience!* Are we obedient to the *Law* of God and his *Church*, when we make no Scruple of committing Sin, of putting by our Prayers, of neglecting the Sacraments, and of easily dispensing with *Festival Duties?*

O *Virgin Lady*, succour us Sinners, weeping and lamenting in this Vale of Tears; cast down your *Motherly Eyes* upon us; obtain for us an *humble Heart*, a *chaste Soul*, and an *obedient Spirit*: We know we must endeavour to *copy* your Virtues, if we think of obtaining the *Favour* of your Intercession.

The *blessed Virgin Mary*, with the *Infant Jesus* in her Arms, being come into the Temple, *she* immediately *consecrates* him to his Eternal Father, delivering him into the Hands of *Simeon* the Priest, who had a Promise of seeing the *Saviour* of the World before he died. God has a long time called upon us to give him our Hearts, and shall we refuse him so *mean* an Offering? O Lord, my Heart is in thy Hands, dispose of it as thou pleaseſt.

Examine yourselves, and resolve upon imitating the Virtues and Offerings which your *Lady* recommends to you in the Festival of this Day. *She offer'd up to God her*

most

most tender Treasure ; offer you your Hearts : She offer'd up her Son ; so do you your Children ; but let it be by the Hands of Mary ; nothing can be denied her.

24th Day. *On St. Matthias.*

REFLECTION.

THE Brethren being assembled at *Jerusalem*, to the Number near of a hundred and twenty, in order to chuse an *Apostle*, to supply the Place of the Traitor *Judas*; they propoled two, *Joseph*, surnamed the *Just*, and *Matthias*; and the Lot fell upon *Matthias*, who was associated amongst the *Eleven*. (Acts 1.) Great Saint, how does your *Election* comfort our Hearts ! Millions of Angels have forfeited their Happiness ; their Places in Heaven must all be filled up, and may we not be of the Number decreed to fill them ? Have we not reason to believe so, when such singular Marks of Mercy have accompanied us from the Cradle ? But when we reflect, that *Judas* fell, so favour'd of *Christ*, and an *Apostle* too, here again we have great reason to tremble.

The proud *Angels* fell from Heaven, and they are to be succeeded by *Saints* : *Saul* lost his Crown, and *David* found it ; *Judas* his Place among the Predestinate, and St. *Matthias* filled it. Merciful Lord, what will our Lot be ? Shall we persevere to the End ?

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We know thy Arm is stretched forth to aid us ; we know a Crown is held over our Heads to reward our Conquests ; and that if we lose it, it must be through our own Neglect.

The Apostle St. *Matthias* having zealously propagated the Faith of *Christ*, ended his Life in a glorious Martyrdom. Let us die to Sin and a wicked World : Let us, upon all Occasions, zealously promote the Cause of God, and the Good of Souls, without the least regard to what the *World will say*. How shall we be able to resist to Blood, when our daily Failings get the better of us ?

Examine yourselves, and see how conformable your Lives have been to the Life of St. *Matthias*. Have recourse to his Patronage, and pray, that as he was admitted into the College of the Apostles, so may you be enrolled amongst the Saints.

Ash-Wednesday. On *Lent*.

REFLECTION.

TH E Institution of *Lent* is primitive and *apostolical*: It has been religiously observed in all Ages of the Church down to us : *Christ* himself gave Birth to this Ordinance, (Mat. 4.) and he sanctified it in Person. We are expressly commanded to offer up to God the *Tenths* of our Goods, and and why not likewise the *Tythe* of our Lives,

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by an annual *forty Days* Penance ? Does not the Expiation of criminal Excesses call for Punishment ? Do not the Dispositions for worthily celebrating the Memory of *Christ's* Passion require such a Sacrifice ?

If we ever hope for Mercy, *now is the acceptable Time*, (2 Cor. 6.) *now the Days of Salvation*, wherein all the Treasures of the Church are opened to us. Our good God well knows we are in Sin ; he sees the Mouth of eternal Death is open to devour us ; and therefore he calls aloud, *now is the Time*. What would not the suffering Souls in *Purgatory* give for these Minutes ! Would they think a *forty Days* Fast too rigorous ? Would they seek an Indulgence, or murmur as if they were hardly used by the *Church* ? No ; they would certainly bleis God, that he had afforded them a *Time*, wherein they might easily satisfy for their Sins.

Let us therefore lay hold of *it*, while it is in our Power : If we have offended by indulging our Passions, let a rigorous Self-denial make a speedy amends : If a yielding Inclination has been an Occasion of Sin, let a discreet Severity be sure to check it : Let voluntary Chastisements now sue for Pardon. *Spare, O Lord, spare thy People* ; (Joel 2.) cast us not for ever from thy Face.

Examine yourselves, and *now* resolve upon regulating whatever has been omitted in the foregoing *Lent* : Let not fresh Sins destroy the Merit of your good Endeavours : Carefully

fully correspond with the *Design* of the Church at this time : Invent not lame Pretences to indulge Nature : Let what may *punish*, and not what may *please*, be the Rule of this Season.

Practical Reflections FOR MARCH, Nineteenth Day.

On St. Joseph.

REFLECTION.

ST. *Joseph* was a *just Man* : (Mat. 1.) His *Justice* was general, including all Virtues : His *Wisdom* must be great, when to him was committed the Care of the Son of God : His *Purity* must be extraordinary, being chosen a Companion for the purest of Virgins, and most innocent of Men. We ought to admire his *Faith*, in readily believing what the Angel told him, when he said *Mary* should conceive, and bring forth a Son. We ought to honour his *Obedience*, in flying, the very Night he was admonish'd, with our Lady and her Infant into *Egypt*, without reasoning the Difficulties of the Voyage, or Strangeness of the Country.

How

How great an *Humility* must possess his Heart, when, being descended of the Royal Blood of *David*, he chearfully notwithstanding submitted to the Fatigues of a poor Carpenter ! What *Mildness* did lie shew in the Management of his blessed Family ? With what *Patience* did he undergo the Difficulties he met with through the Course of his Life ? Was not his Heart swallow'd up in Extasies of *Love* ? Did he not expire in the Arms of *Jesus* and *Mary* ?

Chaste St. *Joseph*, the most honoured of Fathers, the best of Spouses, the most just of Men, put up our *Petitions* to the Throne of Mercy. O ! how am I confounded, when I reflect on my Life, so differing from yours ! Where is that Faith, Love, and Patience ? Where is the Obedience, and perfect Resignation to the Will of God, which inflamed your Breast ?

Examine yourselves, and labour in an Imitation of the Virtues of St. *Joseph* ; it is the most acceptable Devotion you can offer to him. Take him for your *Patron*, and Protector of Purity : Beg of him that, by the Care he had of *Jesus*, we would succour you in Distress, and obtain for you a happy Death.

25th Day. On the Annunciation of our
Lady.

R E F L E C T I O N .

WHEN Europe, Asia, Africa, and the vast America, knew nothing but Idolatry; when Vice was so in Fashion, as to become authorized by the Gods they adored; when Men were slaughtered and sacrificed to Devils; when Jewry, that little Spot of Ground (which alone worshipped the true God) was over-run with Hypocrisy, Pride, Ambition, and all manner of Excess; then did blessed Jesus think of our Redemption. An Angel announces to our humble *Lady* her being made choice of to be the Mother of God; and she readily submits to the Will of Heaven. *Be it unto me according to thy Word.* (Luke 1.) Let us learn her *Resignation*.

What! a poor Virgin a Mother of God! Can a Woman, born in Time, bear a God Eternal corporally in her Womb! It is a particular Grace bestow'd on *Mary*; a Privilege not to be granted to another. And how does she demean herself? *Behold the Handmaid of our Lord.* (Luke 1.)

Let us imitate her *Humility*. Were we but half so humble, chaste, and resign'd, as was the blessed Virgin, we should carry Jesus in our Hearts. Let us not wonder, that he descended into the Bosom of a meek Virgin

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when he daily enters the Breasts of Sinners : Does he not so, as often as we communicate ?

O Virgin Lady, intercede for us to your beloved Son ; the Son can deny his Mother nothing : Shew yourself a Mother to us, for whom Christ died : We desire but a part of those Virtues, which adorned your Son.

Examine yourselves, and be not slack in your Devotions to the blessed Virgin Mary ; chuse her for your Mother ; acknowledge her for your Queen ; take her for your Advocate ; honour and love her, because God has done so ; Morning, Noon, and Evening devoutly salute her with the Angels Ave ; it is a Prayer she is delighted with.

Practical Reflections

FOR APRIL.

TUESDAY in Holy-Week.

On Jesus in the Garden.

REFLECTION I.

OUR dearest Saviour is enter'd the Garden of Gethsemane. See how, already oppres'd with Grief, he lies prostrate on the Ground, to the Astonishment of Men and Angels : Hear his Moans ; my Soul is sorrowful, even unto Death. (Mat. 26.)

The Soul of my God sorrowful ! At Death ! when he has Legions of Angels ready at a Call ! At Death ! when it is *he* that has encouraged so many Thousands to lay down their Lives, fearless of it ! No, my Soul, it is not *Death*, but thy *Sins*, cause him to grieve : He foresees the Ingratitude of his *Jewish Children*, in barbarously tormenting him ; he foresees how many Christians, by their repeated Sins and sacrilegious Communions, will be sucking Poison from his precious Blood ; and this makes him grieve.

O *Jesus*, none but thyself can conceive the Excess of thy afflicted Heart : Sin is the Cause of it ; I will detest it therefore : No wonder, thou desirest the *bitter Cup* to be removed from Thee ; it is bitter indeed : *But, Father, not my Will, but thine be done.* (Mat. 26.) Was there ever such Resignation ? Christians, let us learn it ; it is for our Instruction : Let us *resign* ourselves under the Divine Appointments.

Judas, whither so fast ? wilt thou betray thy Lord with a Kiss ? Remember *Uzzah* was struck dead for only touching the *Ark* of God : It were better for thee that thou hadst never been born. But no *Threats* nor *Sweetness* can soften the Stone in his covetous Heart : Behold he advances, and betrays his Master with a *Kiss*. How does *Jesus* receive him ? *Judas*, my Friend and Apostle, did I not this very Night feed thee with my

Body

Body and Blood, and wilt thou notwithstanding thus unkindly use me ?

Examine yourselves, and be sure not to take Part in *Judas's Treachery*. By every mortal Sin, you do not only betray, but crucify your Lord.

WEDNESDAY in Holy-Week.

On Jesus in the Court of the High-Priest.

REFLECTION II.

No sooner was *Christ* betray'd by the base Perfidiousness of *Judas*, but immediately a Band of merciless Soldiers laid hold of him, dragging him to *Annas*, and thence to *Caiphas's Palace*; where he is received by a bloody Assembly of the chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders, unanimously resolved to make away with the Innocent: Therefore they sought false Testimony against *Jesus*, that they might deliver him up to Death. (Mat 26.) Barbarous Jews! do not thus unjustly murder your *Messias*! What has he done to deserve this Cruelty: He came down from Heaven to save your Souls; he has preach'd, and wrought Miracles, to convert your hard Hearts; and is this the best Return you design to make him?

Tho' they much endeavoured it, yet they could not suborn sufficient Witnesses. The High-Priest therefore conjured him to tell

them if he were the Son of God. He answer'd *I am*. At this *Caiphas* rent his Garments, saying, *He has blasphemed*. They all cry'd out, *He is guilty of Death*. Then they spit in his Face, mock'd him, buffeted and beat him. Ah! Christians, let us not wonder at it; it is what *ourselves* have done by our Sins; by our rash Distractions Judgments, Pride, Impurities, Anger, and Sloth.

Tho' our dearest Saviour met with this sad Usage, yet nothing troubled him more than *Peter's Fall*: To see the most zealous of the Apostles, who but just before had protested he had rather die than deny his Master; to see him now *deny him*, and with an Oath too; this did truly afflict him: However, *Peter* being admonish'd of his Sin, *went forth, and wept bitterly*. (Mat. 26.) Have we done so at the sight of our Sins?

Examine yourselves, and be not so hard hearted, as to add the least to your Saviour's Torments. Presume not upon your own Strength, since *two Apostles* fell, and *one* of them an eternal Prey to Devils.

THURSDAY in Holy-Week.

On Jesus arraign'd before Pilate.

REFLECTION III.

EARLY the next Morning the Council deliver up *Jesus* to the Roman President *Pontius Pilate*. The Calumnies of the *Jews* come

come in thick upon him ; but he answers not a Word : Do you hear, says Pilate, what they object against you ? He is silent still. Dear Redeemer ! thou could'st not give us a more convincing Proof of thy being more than a Man : Falsly accus'd, and not a Word in thy Defence ! Christians, are we silent under Provocations ? Do we bear our Afflictions with a silent Patience ?

Tho' Pilate labour'd all he could to bring off Jesus by declaring his Innocence, yet the Importunities of the Jews prevail'd upon him : Die he must, and upon a Cross too : Let him be crucify'd ; let his Blood be upon us and our Children, (Mat. 27.) was their universal Voice. Envious Jews, what has Jesus done to deserve to die ; is he guilty of Injustice ? has he committed Murder ? has he been seditious ? that the notorious Barrabbas is prefer'd before him ? Why do you call upon his guiltless Blood to fall heavy upon you ? Your Prayer will be heard ; you shall perish in your Infidelity ; your Country shall be laid waste ; your Race destroy'd ; and the small remainder of you become Vagabonds upon the Earth.

However, Sentence is pronounc'd, and Jesus bound to the Pillar, where his Blood is let out from innumerable Wounds. After this, he is crown'd with sharp Thorns ; he is set forth in a Fool's Dress ; mock'd, spit upon, and cruelly beaten. Ye Angels of Heaven, can you see the Holy of Holies thus

abused and not appear in his Defence ! Ah ! my Soul, it is thy own Case : How often hast thou scourg'd him by thy Pride and Impurities ! How often hast thou beat the Thorns into his Head by scandalous Example ? How often hast thou buffeted him by Slander and rash judging ? How often hast thou mock'd him by profaning the Sacraments ! Repent and amend ?

Examine yourselves, and if you have been so unhappy, as to join with the Jews in any of their Cruelties, sue for Pardon by an early Repentance : Pray that the Blood of Jesus may heal your Souls.

F R I D A Y in Holy-Week.

On Jesus upon Mount Calvary.

REFLECTION IV.

OUR Saviour being forc'd to carry his heavy Cross to the Place of Execution, so weak he was through the Extremity of his Pains and Loss of Blood, that he fainted under it : My Soul, Christ bore his Cross, to expiate thy Sins, and to teach thee to carry thy daily ones. O holy Cross, which art consecrated with the precious Blood of my God, receive me into thy Embraces.

Being come to Mount Calvary, he is immediately nail'd to his Cross, and lifted up into the Air, to be expos'd to the Scoffs of the insulting Multitude. Listen to his Moans ; *At least you my Friends take pity of me :*

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me: (Job 19.) See how my wounded Body hangs naked upon a Cross for your Sins; see how they have dug my Hands and Feet, and number'd my Bones, for your Sins: (Psalm 21.) but no one regards him.

Wretched Jews, where is your Humanity? Your Redeemer cries out in a lamentable manner, and will no one pity him? He is thirsty, and is *Gall* a Cordial for a dying Man? In his expiring Breath he prays for you, and will you thank him with a Discharge of Blasphemies? But he faints apace, his Limbs grow pale, and hanging down his Head, he dies. Christians, he died *for us*, and for those very Jews that put him to death: But to see his *Blood* let out with the Blood of common Victims; to see it mix'd with the Dust of Mount Calvary; who can think on't without Indignation? Were not the Angels astonish'd at it? Did not the Rocks split, and the Vail of the Temple rend asunder? Did not the Ground open, the Sun grow pale? Was not all *Nature* sorrowful?

Examine yourselves, and detest all Sin: How heinous must it be, when nothing but the Blood of a God can cancel it! Likewise practise the Virtues your Saviour in his *Passion* recommends to you: Imitate his *Tears* in the Garden of Gethsemane: Imitate his *Meekness* in the Court of Caiphas: Imitate his *Silence* when brought before Pilate: Learn his *Patience* at the Pillar, and his *Love* upon the Cross.

SATURDAY in Holy-Week.

On Jesus in the Grave.

REFLECTION V.

AFTER our Lord was dead, his sacred Body was taken down from the Cross by *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Nichodemus*; who having embalm'd it, and wrapt it up in a clean Winding-sheet, laid it in a new Sepulchre, in which no Body had as yet lain. (Luke 23.) What an Affliction must it be to our blessed *Lady*, and the rest of the Disciples, to lose the Sight of their dearest *Jesus*? Do we now embalm our Saviour's Body with the Spices and Perfumes of ho'ly Prayer? Have we wrapt it up in the Sheet of Virtues, and laid it in the Tomb of a purify'd Heart? It is our Duty to do so.

Weep, my Soul, at the Door of the Monument; bewail there the Death of thy God, and the Anguish of *Mary*: Call to mind what thou hast seen pass from the Garden of *Gethsemane* to the *Sepulchre* thou remain'dst at; and then be surpris'd at the Malice of the *Jews*, the Enormity of Sin, and at the overflowing Love of thy Lord and Saviour.

Our blessed Redeemer is full of Charity: While his Body is in the Grave, his Soul is at *Limbus*, comforting the *Pious* there, and assuring them that the Time of their *Deliverance* is at hand. We cannot conceive the

Joy

which must necessarily fill the Hearts of those pious Souls at the Sight of their Lord: They long expected the happy Time of their Redemption, and now is it come. Christians, let us join with them in blessing our Redeemer: Let us beseech him to remember us, the still banish'd Children of Eve, wailing and weeping in this Vale of Tears. *Free, O Lord, my Soul from the Lion's Mouth;* (Ps. 21.) *let not my Enemies prevail over me.*

Examine yourselves, and let not a Day pass without spiritually watching at the Sepulchre of Christ, by a serious Meditation on his Death and Passion. Let every Action of your Lives express a Gratitude for the infinite Mercies he has bestow'd upon you. Say with the rejoicing Fathers of Limbus; *Thou art worthy, Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power; because, O God, thou hast redeem'd us in thy Blood.* (Rev. 4.)

E A S T E R - D A Y.

On the Resurrection of our Lord.

R E F L E C T I O N VI.

CHRIST is risen; he has conquer'd Death; he has broke down the Gates of Hell; he triumphs over the Devil and the bloody Jews. Woman, why weepest thou? Thy Tears are now unseasonable; our Lord can die no more, unless it be within our Hearts. Rejoice, my Soul;

Soul; join with the *Church* in her repeated *Allelujahs*; for *This is the Day which our Lord has made.* (*Psalm 117.*) Nothing could more establish our *Faith* in the *Divinity*, than the *Resurrection* of our *Saviour*; nor could any thing more powerfully raise our *Hope*: *If the Head be risen, will not the Members rise too?*

St. Gregory.

Christ is risen: Is he risen in our *Hearts*? Has he dethron'd the *Devil* there? Does he reign in us by *Grace*? Have we by *Humility*, *Patience*, *Love*, and other *Christian Virtues*, prepar'd an *Abode* for him? Happy we, could we truly say it.

It will avail us nothing to celebrate *Christ's Resurrection* in outward *Shew*, unless we interiorly rise with him: This must be, by dying to *Sin* and to the *Occasions* of it; by dying to our *Passions*, and to all evil *Inclinations*; by dying to *Sloth*, and all *Remissness* in the way of *Virtue*. *Christ rising from the Dead, dies no more.* (*Rom. 6.*) Have we rose thus? Have we not by *Relapses* prov'd perfidious to our *Promises*? Good Lord, deliver us from so great a *Misfortune*: Since thou hast died for us, let not thy *Blood* rise up in *Judgment* against us.

Examine yourselves, and resolve at this time to rise *effectually* with your dearest Lord: *Purge away the old Leaven*; (*1 Cor. 5.*) *Put off the old Man, and put on the new.* (*Eph. 4.*) If you die with *Christ*, you will certainly rise with him.

23d Day. On St. George.

REFLECTION.

ST. George was born in *Cappadocia*, a Province of the lesser *Asia*: He was from his Infancy a Christian, of noble Blood, a Commander in the Emperor *Dioclesian's* Army, and by the same *Dioclesian* beheaded at *Rome* for his Faith, after he had, with an undaunted Bravery, espous'd the Cause of *Jesus Christ*. His *Courage* in Battle, and his *Constancy* in suffering, were Motives to our Forefathers in chusing him for the glorious *Patron* of our Island.

St. George was a Soldier: We are Soldiers of *Jesus Christ*, and do we fight his Battels with the *Resolution* and *Courage* of this great Saint? Alas! how can we pretend to it, when we soon give ground to the Temptations of Pride, Vain-glory, Lust, and Revenge; and upon every little Occasion take on with the World! Is this an Imitation of the brave St. George? 'Tis true we may call him the *Patron* of our *Island*, but we cannot of our *Hearts*. How do we imitate his *Constancy* in Suffering, when we are ever plying under the least Affliction; when we grumble at Providence upon every Disappointment; and criminally complain we are too hardly dealt with! Alas! can we suffer in this World what our Sins have deserved? Are our Racks to be compar'd to those St. George underwent? It is

is through many Tribulations, and not by the Way of Roses, we are to go to Heaven.

Blessed St. George, put up your Prayers for us, that sharing in your Courage, Constancy, and Resolution, neither the Fear of what the World will say, nor its pernicious Example, nor any Artifices of the Devil may ever shock us. We cannot want Encouragement, when we have you for our Captain; Thus by conquering our Enemies, we may justly call you Patron of our Island.

Examine yourselves, and pray for the Virtues this great Saint recommends to you: Beseech him to mediate for your unhappy Country; which, being heretofore a Kingdom of Saints, now groans under the heavy Weight of Sin and Error.

Practical Reflections

F O R

M A Y, First Day.

On St. Philip and James.

R E F L E C T I O N

ST. Philip and St. James were both Apostles of Jesus Christ: They were call'd by him; and without Delay they left all and follow'd him. We are all call'd by a singular Mercy to the Christian Faith, and

and do we answer the *Call*? It is not requir'd that we leave whatever we are born to in this World; but do we forsake Sin, and the Occasions of it? Do we withdraw our Hearts from an immoderate Love of Creatures, and fix them on *Jesus*? This we must do, to copy out the Example of these two Apostles.

St. *Philip* no sooner became a Follower of *Christ*, but he imparted his Happiness to his Friend *Nathaniel*: He inform'd him of the *Messias*, and effectually encourag'd him to become his Disciple. Are we as ready by Word and Example to implant the Gospel in our Neighbour's Soul? We have daily Opportunities offer'd of practising this Duty. What did not St. *Philip* do? He converted great part of barbarous *Scythia* to the Faith of *Christ*: His Zeal abated not, till a *Cross*, like his Master's, put an End to his Labours, crowning him with Martyrdom. Ah! that we were half so zealous!

St. *James the Lesser*, surnam'd the *Just*, from his very Infancy led so exemplary a Life, that he deservedly gain'd the Esteem of all: So great was his Sanctity, that only he was admitted into the *Sanctuary* of the Temple. Do we, like St. *James*, edify our Neighbour by good Example? We are bound to do so. This Apostle always abstain'd from Flesh, Wine, and strong Drink: He was so addicted to Prayer, that his Knees were as hard as a Camel's Hide: At length, for too freely preaching the Gospel, he was thrown down from

from a Pinacle of the Temple in ~~Jerusalem~~, and being yet alive, and praying for his Enemies the ~~Jews~~, he had his Brains dash'd out with a *Fuller's Club*. Can we say we practise the Self-denials of *this Saint*, when we are ever gratifying ourselves in Diet, Apparel, and almost every thing? Do we pray like him, when half an hour a Day is oftentimes too tedious? and when our Prayers are accompany'd with voluntary Distractions?

Examine yourselves, and see how conformable your Lives have been to these great Patterns, St. Philip and St. James. Be sure to imitate them.

3d Day. On the Finding of the Holy Cross.

R E F L E C T I O N.

THE *Finding of the Holy Cross* is a Festival instituted by the Church, in memory of that Day, wherein St. Helen, Mother to Constantine the Great, found the *Cross* of Christ, after it had lain buried about an hundred and ten Years by the Heathens, who erected a Statue of *Venus* in the Place of it.

O God, I give thee Thanks for this miraculous Discovery of thy *Holy Cross*: I beg that I may partake of thy infinite Merits, who didst die upon it: Grant that I effectually find thy *Cross* in my Soul, by dying to all Sin, and by the Practice of those Virtues thou hast taught me from it. I am resolved not

to

to imitate the Impiety of Infidels, by establishing in my Heart the Love of the World and its sinful Pleasures; *Venus*, *Bacchus*, or *Adonis* shall have no Place there. O good Cross, a long time sought for, and ardently desir'd, admit me to thy Embraces, and conduct me to thy *Lord*, who dying on thee, purchased my Redemption.

Christians, is the *Cross of Christ* planted in our Hearts? Is the Humility of the Cross there? Is the Patience of the Cross there? Is the Charity, Resignation, and Self-denial of the Cross there? We cannot say it, while we are such Slaves to Pride, Ambition, Revenge, Resentments, Fretfulness, and a luxurious Life. Let us reform our Lives; let us by a Detestation of Sin and the World, and by bringing ourselves to holy Dispositions of *Christ* crucify'd, endeavour to fix his *Cross* in our Hearts.

Examine yourselves, and labour this Day to *find out* and *take up* the *Cross of Christ*: Be not afraid of it, but glory in it: There is no other Way of entering Heaven, but by that of the *Cross*: You have offended God, and your Crosses must make Satisfaction: It is the *Cross* must save you.

HOLY - THURSDAY.

On the Ascension of our Lord.

REFLECTION.

THE forty Days being expir'd, wherein our Lord had comforted and instructed his Apostles after his Resurrection, he leads them forth to Mount Olivet, (beginning his Triumph where he had begun his Passion) where lifting up his Hands, and giving them his Blessing, *He was carried up into Heaven,* (Luke 24.) *Lift up your Gates, ye Princes, and the King of Glory shall enter in :* (Psalm 23.) *Sing to God, sing ye to the Lord, that mounts upon the Heaven of Heavens.* (Psalm 67.) Why don't you say aloud? *The Lamb, which was slain, is worthy to receive Power, and Dignity, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Benediction.* (Rev. 5.)

Can the Child rejoice when it has lost its Father? Are the Sheep glad when their Pastor has left them? If we love Christ, and love ourselves, here we ought to be so. We are to be glad that Christ is ascended into Heaven, there to receive the Reward of his Labours: We ought to rejoice that he is gone before, since it is to open the Gates of Heaven to us.

Go, my dear Saviour, leave this Earth, which hath used thee so ungratefully: It is not fit thy pure and immortal Body should

be

be in company with sinful Creatures. Go, great Conqueror, take possession of that Kingdom, which by so many Titles is justly thy own; take thy *Captives* with thee to honour thy Triumphs: Prepare a Place for us in thy blissful Kingdom. Go, sweet *Jesu*, and be our Advocate; let thy *bitter Passion* plead in our Defence; let thy *gaping Wounds* sue for Pardon: Send thy *Holy Spirit* to be our Guide and Comfort in thy Absence. Ah! when shall we be freed from this tedious Bondage! O! I desire to be loosen'd, and be with Thee.

Examine yourselves, and remember that to triumph with *Jesu*, you must fight with him: He *ascended* from Mount *Olivet*, where he sweat Blood, to mark out to you the Way to Glory. You must disengage your Hearts from all earthly Clogs, and be *daily ascending*, to ascend to Happiness.

W H I T - S U N D A Y.

On the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

R E F L E C T I O N I.

W H E N the Day of Pentecost was come, the Disciples were all in one Place, and suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a mighty Wind, and it fill'd all the House where they were sitting; and there appear'd unto them Cloven Tongues as it were of Fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were fill'd with

the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2.) *The Holy Ghost* is a Spirit of Life that animates us, a Spirit of *Wisdom* instructing us, and a Spirit of *Love* uniting us to our God: He is a Spirit of *Peace* which calms our Passions; he is a Spirit of *Purity* purifying our Souls, and a Spirit of *Comfort* to our afflicted Hearts. Do we live by this *Spirit*? Are we quicken'd with it? Or rather, are we not govern'd by the Spirit of the World, the Flesh, and *Satan*?

Blessed *Jesus*, thou hast dy'd for us, and is not this enough? Must thou send the *Holy Ghost* to lodge within our Breasts? Christians, it is necessary; the Work of our Redemption cannot be compleat without him. How many Sinners has the *Holy Ghost* justify'd by his Grace! How many Weak has he strengthen'd, Sorrowful has he comforted, Ignorant has he enlighten'd, Proud has he humbled, and Tepid has he inspir'd with a pious Fervour! Let the Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, and Confessors; let all the Saints, who have gone before us, give Evidence of it.

We are undone, if the *Holy Ghost* warms not our Breasts with his Divine Flames. We shall certainly sink under the Weight of our Misfortunes; we shall be overcome by the World, Vanity, and Self-Love; we shall sin without Remorse, and die in our Sins. *Come, Holy Ghost, replenish the Hearts of the Faithful, and kindle the Fire of thy Love in them.*

Examine yourselves, and since you are not capable of taking a Step towards Heaven, but

as influenced by the *Holy Spirit*, earnestly pray for his holy Grace. Beg of him so to enliven your *Faith*, that in every Particular you may live up to your Belief: Beg of him to strengthen your *Hope*, that you may never be confounded: Beg of him to increase your *Love*; he is able to do it; he is all *Love*; he is the eternal *Love* of the Father and the Son.

W H I T - M O N D A Y.

On the Effects of the Holy Ghost's Descent
REFLECTION II.

NO sooner had the *Holy Ghost* shed his Beams upon the hundred and twenty Disciples, who were assembled together in holy Prayer, but they were all fill'd with a burning *Charity*; their Love of God was as strong as Death; their Love for their Neighbour could not be confin'd, it must spread itself over the whole World. Is our Charity such? O best Comforter, sweet Guest of the Soul, come and refresh our dull Hearts.

Great was the *Zeal* of these pious Disciples upon their receiving the *Holy Ghost*: They could not stay, but must forthwith carry their Master's Praises into all the Corners of the Earth: Is it not amazing, that a few poor Persons, without Credit, Force or Eloquence, should convince the best Philosophers of the Truth they taught? That they should bring

the Infidel World, great and little, to believe and profess, that a *Poor Man*, sacrificed upon a *Cross*, was their *great God*? But what could they not do, when directed by the *Light of the Holy Ghost*?

Great likewise was the Courage which the *Holy Ghost* infused into the Disciples. They, who not long before were so very cowardly, as to abandon their Lord, are now prepar'd to expose themselves to the most threatening Dangers: Fearless of Torments, they are ready to undergo the severest of them, and to seal their Doctrine with their Blood. Do we partake of this *Courage*, when we cannot bear the least Contradiction, and are presently dejected at every ordinary Calamity?

Examine yourselves, and prepare for receiving the *Charity*, *Zeal*, and *Courage* which the *Holy Ghost* gave to the Disciples on the Day of *Pentecost*. You must prepare yourselves for his coming, as they did; that is, with a *Christian Union*, a *Retiring from the World*, and a *Perseverance in Prayer*. Come, kind *Comforter* of our afflicted Souls; enlighten them with thy *Flames*; govern them by thy *Wisdom*; sanctify them by thy *Love*; animate them with thy *Grace*; and save them by thy *Mercy*.

Practical Reflections

For J U N E.

TRINITY-SUNDAY.

On the Blessed Trinity.

R E F L E C T I O N .

I Believe that in the *Trinity* there is One God and Three distinct Persons; to wit, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not Three Gods, but only One God. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are equal in Power, Majesty, and Glory: God the Father is from Eternity, Uncreated, Immense, Omnipotent; so is God the Son; so likewise is God the Holy Ghost. The Father has no Beginning; the Son is begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is my *Faith* of the *Blessed Trinity*, in which I am resolved to live and die. *There are Three that give Testimony in Heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One.* (1 John 5.) Go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Mat. 28.)

O Adorable Trinity! Tho' our weak Understanding is not able to fathom the Depth of this Mystery, yet we joyfully submit to what thou hast taught us: We detest *Arius*, and the impious *Macedonius*, who mis-believed these Truths. Alas! thou would'st not be our God, if human Reason were able to comprehend Thee. We adore Thee, *O Blessed Trinity*; our Lives shall ever express thy Praises: Glory be to the *Father*, who out of his mere Goodness has created us: Glory be to the *Son*, who hath mercifully redeem'd us: Glory be to the *Holy Ghost*, who heals our Souls.

Christians, have we not been backward in paying our Homages to the *most Blessed Trinity*? Have we not renounced the Faith of it by a Life of Sin? We don't believe in an *Almighty God*, when we dare offend him; we don't believe in a *wise God*, when we murmur against his Providence; nor do we believe in a *pure God*, when we abandon our Hearts to sinful Pleasures: Have we not thus renounced the Faith of the *Blessed Trinity*?

Examine yourselves, and from this time forward settle a lasting Devotion to the *Blessed Trinity*. As often as you say a *Gloria Patri*, or bless yourselves, raise up your Hearts by lively Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love: Never think nor speak of this Mystery, but with the profoundest Adoration.

C O R P U S - C H R I S T I .

On the Institution of the Holy Sacrament.

R E F L E C T I O N .

JE S U S took Bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the Disciples, and said, Take, eat ; *This is my Body.* (Mat. 26.) And taking the Cup, he gave Thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it;* for *this is my Blood of the New Testament.* When was it Christ gave us his *Body* and *Blood*? At that very time, when Men and Devils were caballing to lay upon him all the Torments that Cruelty could invent. Where did he give us his *Body* and *Blood*? In that very Place, where he had been barbarously persecuted for above thirty Years. To whom did he give his *Body* and *Blood*? To us Sinners, and to those very Jews, who basely murder'd him. Was there ever Love like this?

Dearest Jesus, every Passage of thy Life discovers to us thy *excessive Love*; but here it seems to exceed all Bounds. Ah! true it is, thou hast *loved us to the End*; (John 13.) and with a Love that none but a God could give. What Return shall we make? Alas! our Hearts are too little for Thee. Give us leave to expostulate; why didst thou not stay thy Hands, kindest Redeemer, till the World had been better prepar'd to receive Thee? Didst thou not see how thy own Children

Children were contriving to murder Thee? Didst thou not foresee how many would procure their own Destruction by an *unworthy Participation* of thy *precious Blood* in the *Eucharist*? Didst thou not foresee the great Numbers, who, by denying this Mystery, would give the Lye to thy Eternal Word? Yes, thou didst; but the *Excess* of thy Love could not be contain'd. O! may we never prove ungrateful!

Go my Soul, embrace thy Saviour covered with the Vails of Bread and Wine: *Humble thyself*, since he has so humbled himself for thee: By a *Stratagem* of Love he has found out a *Means* of abiding with thee: Run then to him; and with a Heart full of Joy, Love and Gratitude, fail not to incorporate thyself with him.

Examine yourselves, and particularly on *this Day* give *Thanks* to *Jesus*, that he has given you *Himself* to be your *Food*. Resolve never to be so ungrateful as to offend him more. Often approach to him in the *Sacrament*; but see it be with a Heart full of Love, Humility, Purity, Sorrow, Thanksgiving, and a lively Faith.

24th Day. On St. John the Baptist.

R E F L E C T I O N .

NEVER did any Saint deserve greater Encomiums than did *John the Baptist*; the Patriarchs and Prophets of the *Old Law* did

did not excel him : Hear what our Saviour says of him ; *Amen, I say to you, of the Born of Women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist :* (Mat. 11.) He calls him his *Angel* ; he was pleased to be baptized by him ; nay, the very *Jews* took him for their *Messias*. Let us honour this illustrious Saint ; he is truly great.

It was not Birth, nor Riches, nor any thing of this World, that raised our *Baptist* to this great Esteem : It was his Humility, Chastity, his Zeal for Souls, and Contempt of the World ; it was his penitential Life that thus recommended him. Great Saint, what need had you of *Penance*, when you were happily sanctified in your Mother's Womb, and a lasting *Innocence* accompanied your Life ? Are *Locusts* and *wild Honey* your best Entertainment ? Can you find no other Habitation than a lonesome *Desart* ? nor better Cloathing than the rough *Skin* of a Camel ? Ah ! Christians, it is for our Instruction ; it is to teach us, that the *Followers*, as well as *Forerunner* of *Christ*, ought to lead a Life of *Penance*.

We have been Sinners, tho' St. John was not ; and have we done *Penance* for our repeated Sins ; It must be done in this World, or in the World to come ; chuse the Place you like best : But let me tell you, the greatest Torments here are not to be compared to the least in Purgatory.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and pray for the Spirit of St. John Baptist. Labour by Penance, and a virtuous Life, to follow the Ways of Christ, as he prepared them. Great was the Retiredness of St. John, in continuing many Years in a melancholy Desart: Great was his Humility, in declaring himself to be a mere Voice; and great his Zeal in rebuking Sinners, and in laying down his Life for Justice and Truth.

29th Day. On St. Peter and St. Paul.

REFLECTION.

ST. Peter was called to the Apostleship by Christ: Christ washed his Feet at his last Supper: He committed to him the Government of his Sheep, without Exception: (John 21.) He gave him the Keys of Heaven: (Mat. 16.) He declared him to be the Rock upon which he would build his Church; and thus establish'd him the Head of it. O Father, and Pastor of faithful Souls, how happy am I in being one of your Children, and of your Flock! I acknowledge you the Vicar on Earth of Jesus Christ: Whoever sits in your Chair, him do I submit to with all my Heart.

St. Peter's Zeal was a clear Evidence of that Love which burned in his Breast: It was his Zeal for Christ that wounded Malchus, the High-Priest's Servant; it was the Violence of his Zeal that threw him into the

the Sea to meet his Lord ; it was his Zeal that converted so many thousand Souls, and caused him to lay down his Life for the Faith he preach'd. Are we half so zealous ? Are we never tired with Labour, nor terrified with Death, when the Good of Souls exposes to it ?

St. Paul, tho' once Saul, and a bloody Tyrant, is now a chosen Vessel of Jesus Christ ; he is a Pillar of God's Church ; he is a Saint in Heaven. Let us beg his Patronage on this Day of his Festival. St. Paul was rapt to the third Heaven, where he heard those Secrets which shall never be in the Power of Man to utter : He was appointed by God to carry his Name through the Pagan World. Who can despair, when he sees Paul, once a grievous Sinner, now a Saint in Heaven ? Here it visibly appears, that the most abandon'd Sinners are often-times reserved for the greatest Graces. Christians, have you persecuted Christ by your Sins ? Be not dejected ; look on Paul ; but mind his Repentance too : Can you say with him, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept my Faith.*
(2 Tim. 4.)

Examine yourselves, and strive to tread the Steps of these two glorious Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, who on the same Day purpled Rome with their Blood ; one dying on a Cross, and the other by the Sword. It is by imitating their Virtues you can only merit their favourable Protection.

Practical

Practical Reflections

F O R

J U L Y , Twenty - fifth Day.

On St. James.

REFLECTION.

ST. James the Greater, the Son of Zebedee, and Brother of St. John the Evangelist, was one of the first that were called to the Apostleship by Jesus Christ. He had no sooner heard the Call, but, leaving his Father, his Nets and all, with his Brother John, he followed Christ. How often, and by how many Ways, has God called upon us, and we are still deaf to him! We need not wonder at it, when we reflect how entangled our Hearts are in the Nets of the World: Can we think of serving God and the World? No one can serve two Masters. (Mat. 6.) Let us then imitate St. James, by withdrawing our Affection from a vain World.

St. James was one of those Apostles whom Christ loved most; he made him an Eyewitness of his glorious Transfiguration, and his other Miracles; he accompanied his Lord to the Mountain of Olivet, where he began his Passion. Must there not be something

thing extraordinary in this Apostle, to deserve a particular Love from *Jesus*? No doubt but his Heart was full of Faith, Love, Humility, and all Christian Virtues. Let us imitate him.

St. James preached the Gospel in *Jewry* and *Samaria*, where he had converted many to the Christian Faith; then he went into *Spain*, where he plentifully sow'd the Seeds of the Gospel; after that, he return'd to *Jerusalem*, where, by *Herod Agrippa*, he was put to Death: The *Axe* was his Martyrdom, and he the *first* of the Apostles that suffer'd for *Christ*. Have we the Courage and Resolution of this illustrious Apostle? Are we prepared to die for *Christ*, when we can suffer nothing for his Sake? Does our supine Slothfulness in the Service of God answer the *Labours* of this great Saint? Do we imitate his *Zeal* for Souls, by injuring our Neighbour, and bearing Malice in our Hearts? Blessed St. James, intercede for us to our common Lord: It is an Honour to you, in being the *first* of the Apostles that sealed your *Doctrine* with his Blood.

Examine yourselves, and labour to transcribe the *Virtues* of *this Apostle* into the Copy of your Lives. On this Day of his Festival address yourselves to *him*. The best way of honouring him, is to follow his Example.

26th Day.

26th Day. On St. Anne.

REFLECTION.

ST. Anne is doubly a Mother to the blessed Virgin Mary; to wit, by Birth and Education: She brought her into the World, after many Years of Barrenness; she instructed our *Lady* in all the Duties of Religion; she gave her Lessons of Humility, Love, Chastity, Patience, Prayer, and true Resignation, which she ever after practised to her Dying-day. Nothing was wanting in St. Anne of the Tenderness, Care, or Prudence of a Mother, in all respects; tho' her greatest Concern was to consecrate her Daughter to Almighty God.

Parents, learn here your Obligations to your Children; learn of St. Anne how to breed them up in the Fear of God. Have you, like her, consecrated them to Heaven? Do you, by Word and Example, give them Lessons of Virtue? Are they kept to their Duties? Are they not injured by an immoderate Fondness? Remember you are to give an Account of your Childrens Souls: 'Tis pity Souls should perish through Neglect of Parents, who have taken such Pains to bring them up in the World.

Christians, we have all of us great reason, this Day, to praise our Lord in the glorious St. Anne; whom, of all Women in the World, he deem'd the most worthy to bring forth

forth the *immaculate Mother of God*. Ah ! to what a Pitch of Grace was this *Saint* raised ; the *Product* of whose sacred *Womb*, God himself chose and sanctify'd for his Tabernacle ! O blessed *Root*, from whence that *Twig* of *Jesse* sprang, whose *Bud* and *Flower* was no other than the *sweetest Saviour of Mankind* !

Examine yourselves, and in all your Wants crave the Assistance of blessed St. *Anne*. Imitate her *Patience* in the Time of her Barrenness ; imitate her *Humility*, and her *Love of God* ; imitate her Virtues, and you will obtain her Favour. Say often from your Hearts, Holy St. *Anne*, Mother of *Mary*, and Grandmother of *Jesus*, pray for us Sinners, now, and in the Hour of our Death. *Amen.*

Practical Reflections

F O R

AUGUST, Tenth Day.

On St. Lawrence.

R E F L E C T I O N .

ST. Lawrence was a *Deacon* in the City of *Rome*. To him was committed the *Treasure* of the Church, which he duly and charitably disbursed among the Poor. The greedy Tyrant demanding of him where he had hid it, the *Saint* got together great Numbers

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bers

bers of the Poor, and said, *Here, in these have I laid up the Treasures of the Church.* Ah, faithful Steward of Jesus Christ! how far are we from following thy Example! How do we spend in Excess and Vanity, what we are every-way oblig'd to relieve the Poor with!

St. Lawrence, beholding the Holy Pope *Xistus* led to Martyrdom, was not able to contain himself from breaking out into this loud Complaint; *Father, where are you going without your Son? Whither, O Holy Priest, without your Deacon? You are never used to offer Sacrifices without me your Minister: Wherein have I displeased you? Try me now, and see if you have made choice of an unfit Minister.* O undaunted Courage! O Zeal unparalleled! O Divine Love, much stronger than Death! when shall we possess the Zeal, Love, and Courage of this glorious Saint?

Great were the Torments St. Lawrence underwent for the sake of Christ; but the most cruel was his broiling on the Gridiron, which put a happy End to his mortal Life. Bloody Tyrant, can't thou think of overcoming this Champion of his Lord? Thy Fire is nothing to the Flames of Divine Love, which burns within his Breast: While thou shewest thy Cruelty, thou crownest him with Glory. Rejoice, Christians, at the Triumphs of this Saint, who, as Stephen did Jerusalem, has embellish'd Rome with his noble Blood.

Examine yourselves, and chiefly imitate the Faith of this Martyr. It was a lively Faith

of the next Life that made him esteem all as Dross to gain *Christ*. On this Day of his Martyrdom desire him to appear in your Behalf; his *Scorpions* and *Gridiron* cannot fail of moving God to Mercy.

15th Day. *On the Assumption of our Lady.*

R E F L E C T I O N .

ON this Day the Church celebrates the *Assumption* of the blessed Virgin *Mary*. I cannot doubt, but that her *Body*, as well as her *Soul*, has been long since in Heaven. Would *Christ* suffer the *unblemish'd Body* of his dear Mother to be buried in the Earth? Would he permit that Body, which he preserved in its *Virginity* after Child-bearing, to turn to Corruption, and be the Food of Worms? Can he deny his *Mother* a Privilege, which he granted to many at his *Resurrection*, of rising in *Body* before the last Day? Rejoice, happy Saints, at the glorious Coronation of the *Queen* of Heaven; rejoice, Mankind, you have a powerful Advocate. She is the Mother of God, and therefore can she succour us; she is our Mother, and she will help us.

Most *blessed Virgin*, we cannot conceive your exceeding great Joy in this Day of your Triumph; we only know it has infinitely recompenced all the Afflictions you sustained in this Life. *Dear Lady*, be mindful of us

your poor Clients, and still banish'd Children; turn not your Eyes of Pity from us.

Christians, is a wicked World likely to seduce you? Are you ready to sink under the Weight of Afflictions? Are you falling into the Gulph of miserable Despair? Are you dash'd at the sight of your multiply'd Sins? Desire the Intercession of the Mother of God; in all Occurrences of Life call her to your Assistance. Thousands has she freed from the Gates of Hell, by her powerful Mediation; and is it likely she will forget you? No; let him cease to extol her Pity, who, calling upon her, is not heard. St. Bern.

Examine yourselves, and now join with the heavenly Quires in a hearty Thanksgiving for Mary's Exaltation: The best way of doing it is, by resolving, from this Day forward, to follow her Example. She is extremely well pleased to see you humble by her Example, chaste by her Example, and a true Disciple of her Son, animated thereto by her Example.

24th Day. On St. Bartholomew.

REFLECTION.

THO' all the Apostles are to be admired for their Zeal, Courage, and Constancy, in propagating and maintaining the Cause of Christ, yet a particular Veneration is due to St. Bartholomew upon this account: He had

People

People the most rude and barbarous to deal with, and therefore the greater Difficulties to undergo: However, such was his *Zeal*, that he converted great Part of the *Indies*, and the *Greater Armenia* to the Christian Faith. Do we imitate this his *Zeal*, when we have so little or no Concern for the Good of our Neighbour, or ourselves? Do we imitate him by our Slothfulness in Virtue, and careless Lives?

Extraordinary was the *Courage* of this Apostle; what Hardships did he not go thro' in those *Indian Desarts*! He stuck at nothing to save a Soul! Poor, mean, and inconsiderable as he appear'd to be, he overturn'd the Idols of the *Gentiles*, he destroy'd their sinful Liberties, and establish'd the Faith of a crucify'd God with all its Rigours. Have we the *Courage* of this Saint? Are we prepar'd to bear any Affliction for *Christ's* sake? I fear we cannot say it, tho' we have the encouraging Examples of so many Martyrs.

The Terror of the most cruel and barbarous of Deaths was not capable of shaking this Apostle's *Constancy*: He chose rather to be *flay'd alive*, than give up the Cause he had bravely undertaken. O Holy St. *Bartholomew*, who, with an unshaken *Constancy*, didst willingly submit to the *flaying Knife*, pray for us. No wonder thy *Shrine* is so frequented by the World, when thou hast so victoriously triumph'd over all the Powers of Hell, by a most cruel, indeed, but glorious *Martyrdom*.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to embrace the Virtues which this *Apostle* and *Martyr* sets an Example of: Thus by imitating him on Earth, you will come to reign with him in a happy Eternity.

Practical Reflections FOR SEPTEMBER, Eighth Day.

On the Nativity of our Lady.

REFLECTION.

LET the Earth rejoice, which on this Day is adorn'd with the *illustrious Birth* of the blessed Virgin *Mary*: From her is the Son of Justice to take his Rise. O *blessed* among Women! you are to bear a Child in your sacred Womb; and after all, to remain a *Virgin*: What are the Prophets, Patriarchs, and Martyrs; nay, what the Angels, if compar'd to you? Holy *Mary*, succour the Afflicted, help the Weak, cherish the Disconsolate; *Let all those be sensible of your Aid*, who duly celebrate your happy Birth. *St. Aug.*

What more *humble*, than for the Virgin *Mary* to own herself a poor *Handmaid*, when at that time *she* was chosen to be the Mother of God? What more *humble*, than to be contented

tented with a Stable, when she saw the Lord of Glory lying at her Feet? What more chaste than she? a marry'd Woman, and still a Virgin. No Love can be compar'd to hers; her whole Life was an Extasy of Love; and how could it be otherwise, when her God was ever before her Eyes? Yes, blessed Lady, you have Reason to sing, *My Soul is transported with God my Saviour.* (Luke 1.)

Christians, can we say so? Do we imitate the Humility, Love, and Purity of the blessed Virgin *Mary*? I fear we have too much of *Adam* in us. Down, my Soul; detest thy Pride, thy impure Life, and thy want of Love: In a deep Sense of Gratitude bless thy God for the rich *Present* he has made on this Day to the World. *Mary* signifies a *Sea Star*: Beg of her then that she would shine upon you in all the dangerous Storms of this Life.

Examine yourselves, and use your best Endeavours for duly keeping this Feast of her Nativity: As *she* was born for God, so see that you be spiritually born to him, by avoiding Sin, and by the Practice of her Virtues.

21st Day. On St. Matthew.

REFLECTION.

ST. Matthew was call'd to the Apostleship by Christ; Matthew, follow me. (Mat. 9.) He heard the Voice, and without more ado,

A a 4 follow'd

follow'd his Lord: His Business, Riches, Friends, or Family were not enough to stop him; he easily forsook them all. What is our Behaviour? *Christ* has often said to us, *Follow me;* and have we done it? Have we follow'd him, by renouncing all dangerous Friendships and sinful Employes? Have we follow'd him, by being punctual in our Duties, and by a vigorous Application of ourselves to Virtue? This we must do to imitate St. *Matthew*, and to be Saints in Heaven.

Tho' St. *Matthew* was a *Publican* of an odious and worldly profession, yet by one Call *Christ* turn'd his Heart. Sinners, what Encouragement have you here not to despair! What Grounds to hope that your eternal Lots will be with the Saints! You see in *Matthew*, how the Arms of Divine Mercy are stretch'd forth to receive you upon your first Repentance: Make no Delays then, but cry aloud, *Jesus, Son of David, have Mercy on me.* (Luke 16.) St. *Matthew* preach'd the Gospel in *Judea, Egypt, and Ethiopia*, where he converted great Numbers to the Faith of Christ, and at length seal'd it with his own Blood. Ah! how unlike are we to this great Apostle! We have often made good Resolutions of serving God; and yet how easily and shamefully do we break them? St. *Matthew*, pray for us; pray that we may live up to the Gospel you preach'd, and left to the World for our Instructions.

Examine

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate the *Readiness* and *Resolution* of this *Apostle* and *Evangelist* in a careful Compliance with what you are call'd to. Never think of despairing, when you have here a *Publican* become a *Saint*.

29th Day. *On St. Michael.*

R E F L E C T I O N .

ST. *Michael* is the *Prince* of the Angels; he is the Image of God, and his chief Messenger on Earth: By him God spake to *Moses* and the *Patriarchs*: He is *General* of the heavenly Host; and the first that made head against proud *Lucifer*: He overthrew him, and has bound him fast in eternal Chains. Holy St. *Michael*, the Advocate of Sinners, the Comforter of the Afflicted, our Defender in Temptations, pray for us: We know that now you fight in our Cause, and do daily protect us from the Snares of *Satan*: We chuse you for our Patron, and the Protector of our Souls.

This, Christians, we say; but do our Lives make it appear so? Have we not by Sin taken part with *Lucifer* against God and *Michael*? Do we not at present proudly fight against them; and say in our Hearts, *I will be equal to the most High?* Let us take care; we must soon desert the Devil, or we shall shortly be involv'd in his Damnation.

My

My Soul, on this Day break with *Satan*: list thyself into God Almighty's Service: fight under St. *Michael's* Banner, and thou wilt be sure to conquer. If *Lucifer* shall endeavour to entice thee away by Pride or any other Sin, answer him with *Michael*, who is like to God? O my God, who can compare with thee! Who can fight against thee, that considers thy Charms! Only thou can'st fill my Heart; thou art the Beauty of Angels; cursed be he that dies in Rebellion against thee.

Examine yourselves, and give God Thanks that he has given you such a *Guardian*. Daily beg the Assistance of this *Arch-Angel*; but more particularly on this Day of his Festival, join with all the *Angels* in praising God, and in the Spirit of Adoration prostrate with them.

Practical Reflections FOR OCTOBER, Twenty-eighth Day. *On St. Simon and Jude.*

REFLECTION.

THREE are several Reasons which call upon us to honour those two Saints, *Simon* and *Jude*. They were near a-kin to our Saviour *Christ*; they were made *Apostles*; they were Fathers of the Faithful; they were the

Foundation

Satan: Foundation of God's universal Church: They
fight: triumph'd over the World, Flesh and Devil;
wilt be and by a glorious Martyrdom have enter'd
leavour Heaven.

Let us honour these great Apostles St. *Simon* and St. *Jude*: Let us live up to the Faith they both establish'd, by copying out their Lives. They are *a-kin* to *Christ*; so were we in *Baptism*; we were then made his Children; and have we remain'd dutiful? Do we not actually dishonour and rebell against him by a Life of Sin? This is not to imitate these two Apostles; we shall never thus triumph over the World and the Devil.

O how glorious is the Dignity of an Apostle! We might all be such, did we condemn the World, and zealously promote our own eternal Good, and that of our Neighbour. There is nothing more heroick than to die a *Martyr* for *Jesus Christ*; and this we may all do, would we resignedly submit to the Divine Appointmeats, and patiently embrace the Afflictions sent us. It is thus we may live and die *Martyrs*. St. *Simon* and *Jude* suffer'd great Persecutions; and at length were cut in pieces by their malicious Enemies. We must suffer likewise, before we can enter Heaven; we must fight till Death, before we shall be crown'd.

Examine yourselves, and labour in the Practice of those heroick Virtues, which St. *Simon* and St. *Jude* set an Example of. Be-
seech.

seech them to appear in your Cause, and to put up your Petitions to the Lord of Glory. Conform to the Doctrine St. Jude has left you in his *Canonical Epistle.*

Practical Reflections FOR NOVEMBER, First Day.

On all Saints.

REFLECTION.

WHATEVER Man's *Understanding* can conceive, falls infinitely short of the *Joys of Heaven*. Exceeding great that *Bliss* must be, which could not be purchas'd but by the *Blood of God*. If the *Torments of the Damn'd in Hell* are unspeakable, what must be the *Happiness of the Saints in Heaven*? They are swallow'd up in *Love*; they have all they desire, and nothing that they fear; *Blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in thy House; they shall sing forth thy Praises for evermore.* (*Psalm 83.*)

Don't we hope to be happy with the *Saints*? Is not thy *Kingdom come* our daily *Prayer*? It is; but will avail us little, unless we fight and conquer, as the *Saints* have done. They had their *Weaknesses*, as we have ours, but they bravely overcome them; they had their *Pas-*
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sions, and they courageously crush'd them; they had their Temptations, and they honourably fled them; they had their Sufferings, and they joyfully submitted to them; and therefore have they merited a Crown of Glory. Have we done so? We must of necessity do it, or else we shall lose our Reward in Heaven.

Christians, pretend no *Excuse* for not imitating the *Saints*: You have the *same God* that they had, whose Arms are always stretch'd out to receive you; you have the *same Advantages*, and greater than many of *them*. Pretend not your *Constitution*; you are not more frail than *Peter*, a greater Sinner than *Magdalen*, or more unjust than the *Thief*, and yet they are all *Saints* in Heaven. Pretend not your *Calling, Age, or Sex*; Heaven is full of such.

Examine yourselves, and effectually resolve upon *imitating the Saints*: Only such, as do so, truly keep their *Festivals*, and will be happy with them. Often read their Lives, in order to spur you on to an *Imitation* of them. On this *Day* join with the Church in duly celebrating their *universal Triumphs*.

2d Day. On all Souls.

R E F L E C T I O N .

IT is a holy and wholesome Cogitation to pray for the Dead, that they may be loosen'd from their Sins. (2 Mac. 12.) It is a Devotion very acceptable to God, because it is a Charity done to his Friends, who are not in a Condition

dition of helping themselves, and are always calling upon us for Pity. *Take pity on me,* (Job 19.) is their constant Cry. Let us be mindful of them; let us do our utmost in order to relieve them.

It is likely we have a Parent, a Friend, or some Relation, at this present, suffering in the Flames of *Purgatory*; and can we be so hard-hearted, as not to relieve them, or at least not to contribute to their Relief, when it is in our Power to do it? Let us succour them; they are reduced to the last Extremity of Misery; all the Torments of this World are but a Shadow to those of *Purgatory*.

If a *Cup of cold Water* shall not lose its Reward, what may we not expect, when by our Prayers, Alms, and other good Works, we contribute so much to the comfortable Relief of these suffering Souls! Will they not, when at liberty, appear in our Defence at the Bar of Divine Justice? Will they not endeavour to prevent our coming into that Place of Torments? Undoubtedly they will. *From the Gates of Hell, Lord, deliver thy Servants: Let them rest in Peace: Eternal Rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual Light shine upon them.*

Examine yourselves, and be not backward in assisting poor suffering Souls in *Purgatory*. Help them by your Prayers; give an Alms for their Relief; do Penance for them, and for your own Sins; that you may not have it to do in the World to come. On this Day particularly join with the Church in favour of them.

30th Day.

30th Day, On St. Andrew.

REFLECTION.

ST. Andrew, with his Brother Peter, was the first of the Apostles call'd by Christ: He was fishing in the Sea of Galilee; and no sooner did he hear the Voice of Jesus, saying, *Come after me, I will make you a Fisher of Men,* (Mat. 4.) but without the least Demur he left his Net, and follow'd him. Happy Resolution! Do we give ear to the Voice of Christ, who daily and hourly calls upon us in his holy Inspirations? Don't the Nets of the World, wherewith our Souls have been long entangled, stay us back? Nothing ought to divert us, if we hope to have a Share in this Saint's Bliss.

After the Resurrection of our Saviour, the Apostle St. Andrew enter'd upon his Mission: He preach'd the Gospel to the Scythians, Thracians, and through the greater Part of Greece: By his Doctrine and Miracles he converted Thousands to the Faith of Christ: God has given the Charge of his Neighbour to every one; (Eccl. 17.) and have we duly comply'd with it? have our Lives been edifying? have they preach'd good Morality to a wicked World?

After great Pains taken in the Conversion of Infidels, St. Andrew was at length condemn'd to die; the Death of the Cross was his decreed Martyrdom: He no sooner beheld

the

the happy Instrument, but he burst out into these pious Breathing's: *O good Cross, a long time sought-for, and most earnestly desir'd, receive me now, and conduct me to my Master, who, by dying on thee, purchased my Redemption.* O the Force of Love! Do we, like this Martyr, desire to suffer in the Cause of Christ? Are we prepar'd for Martyrdom, when we cannot bear the ordinary Trials of an Injury or Contempt? When we can't submit to the daily Inconveniences of human Life?

Examine yourselves, and see how near you come to the Love, Zeal, and Courage of this great Apostle. Beg of him to join his Prayers with you, that you may be the better able to follow his Example.

Practical Reflections For DECEMBER.

Advent-Sunday. *On Advent.*

R E F L E C T I O N.

ADVENT is a Time appointed by the Church to prepare ourselves in for the Coming of our Lord. To employ it well, we must enter into the Dispositions of the Word Incarnate in the Womb of Mary. What are these? He humbled himself to the lowest degree imaginable, by assuming the Shape of sinful Man.

Man. Blessed Jesus, thou hast humbled thyself even to the Astonishment of Men and Angels. Let us humble ourselves this Time of *Advent*: Let us be resign'd to the Will of God; and from our Hearts rejoice, that we have an Opportunity offer'd of uniting our Afflictions to the Sufferings of Jesus.

Our Saviour, in the *Womb*, made an entire *Oblation* of himself to God: He consecrated all his Thoughts, future Words, and Actions, to his eternal Father. Let us do the like every Day of *Advent*: We have the most endearing Instances of an infinite Love to engage us to it: Thrice happy we, who are blessed with a Jesus, and have it in our power to make him an Offering.

Our Saviour, in his *Mother's Womb*, gives us a Lesson of *Mortification*. He was no sooner conceived, but he condemn'd himself during the Space of nine Months to a dark Prison: He condemn'd himself to Misery as soon as he should be born; and after that to a Death of Torments. Let us, this Time of *Advent*, retire from the World, and recollect ourselves in imitation of our Saviour. Let us Mortify our Passions, retrench Self-love: Let us shun all sinful Divertisements, and whatever suits not to a Time of Penance.

Examine yourselves, and resolve now to practise the *Mortification*, *Humility*, and *Oblation*, which *Christ* made of himself in the *Womb of Mary*. Call to mind the many

Advents ye have lost by your Sins and Slothfulness, in order to spur you on the more vigorously to keep this well.

8th Day. *On the Conception of our Lady.*

R E F L E C T I O N.

OUR Lady's *Conception* was very wonderful. She was conceived without the least Spot of Original Sin. She no sooner had a Being, but it was consecrated to God. Are our Hearts immaculate? *Christ is to be form'd in each of us:* (Gal. 4.) Are our Souls fitted for so great a Guest? Does the Love of God take up our Thoughts?

It would not have been agreeable to the Sanctity of *Christ* to have been contain'd in a Body stain'd with *Sin*: It is not suitable to the Wisdom of *Christ* to take *sinful* Blood for the Expiation of *Sin*; nor does it suit with his Bounty to deny his *Mother* the Grace of *Innocence*, which costs him little, and honours her so much: No, he could never deny it her: Nor can it be thought that *she*, who from all Eternity was predestinated to be the *Mother of God*, should at her *Conception*, or ever, have been a Captive to the Devil. Now, Christians, what reason have we to hope that *Christ* will take up a Dwelling in our Hearts, when they are charg'd with the Guilt not of *me*, but *many* Sins; not with the Sin of *Adam*,

but

but with our own voluntary and grievous Depravations?

The blessed Virgin being conceived *without Sin*, she was not subject to those Passions of Concupiscence to which we all are: When did she in the least dishonour her Parents? When did she create any Differences with her Neighbour? Did she ever scorn the Helpless, or cast off the Poor? No, *she* was humble of Heart, *chaste* in her Thoughts, and transported with the *Love of God* and her Neighbour: *She was considerate in her Words, prudent in her Actions, her whole Life was a Chain of Virtues.* Do we strive against our Passions and daily Failings? Do we imitate the *Virgin* by a virtuous Life?

Examine yourselves, and honour the *Conception of the Virgin Mary. She is most beautiful, and not a Spot is in her.* (Cant. 4.) Imitate her by a spiritual Regeneration from Sin, and a Life of Virtue.

21st Day. *On St. Thomas Apostle.*

R E F L E C T I O N.

ST. Thomas was born in *Galilee*, and made an *Apostle* by *Jesus Christ*. Our Saviour had been rudely treated at *Jerusalem*; and the Apostles apprehending the Danger of his going up again, dissuaded him from it; only St. Thomas gallantly said, *Let us go and die*

with him. (John 11.) Do we imitate the Resolution of this great Apostle? In a Calm of Prosperity, when all Things go well, what is there we imagine we cannot do? O then we love our *Lord*, and do think that nothing can separate us from him; but no sooner are the Storms of Trial up, but our Resolutions vanish, we shamefully yield to the Corruption of Nature, and are far from dying with our suffering *Lord*.

St. Thomas being inform'd by the rest of the Apostles, of our Saviour's Resurrection, and how that, during his Absence, they had seen him in their Company; 'tis true he expected the same Privilege, and therefore would not believe it; but when our Saviour appear'd to him, and bid him feel his Wounds, what did he say? *My Lord, and my God;* (John 20.) pardon my Incredulity; I confess thou art the Son of the living God, whom I saw expiring upon a cruel Cross: I believe thou art Risen. Do we imitate the Repentance of this Apostle? Ah! how seldom do we cry from our Hearts, *My Lord, and my God!*

St. Thomas preach'd the Gospel in the *East-Indies*: He converted such Numbers there to the Christian Faith, that he is deservedly stil'd the *Patron* of that Country. After great Pains taken in the *Conversion* of those People, he was put to death, his Body being run through with divers *Lances*. Do we die to Sin? Are we dead to Concupiscence and a depraved

depraved Nature? We must die thus, if we hope to live to an eternal Life.

Examine yourselves, and labour to imitate the *Courage* and *Repentance* of St. Thomas. Read his Life, that it may move you to an Imitation: Beg the Concurrence of his efficacious Prayers. Pray for those Countries which are again relapsed into their former Infidelity.

22d Day. *On the Incarnation of our Lord.*

R E F L E C T I O N I.

Mankind had groan'd under the Weight of Sin about 4000 Years, nor was it still able to make Satisfaction for the least Offence: All the *Sacrifices* ever offer'd could not atone for this sinful World: The Faith of *Abraham*, the Patience of *Job*, the Penance of *David* would not do; nothing but *God* could satisfy for it. See how the *Offended* turns Advocate for the Offender: Behold he is become *Incarcinate* in the Womb of a Virgin *for us Men*. Was there ever Mercy like this? *O Heavens, stand affrighted at it!* (Jer. 2.)

Lord, give us leave to expostulate with thy Goodness: Why would'st thou thus sacrifice thyself for us poor Clay? Hadst thou been less happy, were we to be left in the Mass of Damnation? No, it was thy *Love* made thee stoop so low. Rejoice ye *Prophets*, your Sighs and Tears have now proved successful: Re-

joice captive Saints, Heaven's Gates will shortly be open'd to you: Rejoice blessed Virgin, thou bearest thy God in thy sacred Womb: Rejoice Man, your *Redeemer* is ransoming your enslaved Soul.

Christians, what Return do we make for this exceeding great Mercy? We had certainly been despairing Souls amidst eternal Flames, had not our offended God undertaken our Redemption. We can have nothing now to fear, when our God is become *Incarnate* for us. Consider, my Soul, in God thy Saviour, who has given thee a Title to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Examine yourselves, and see what the Comportment of your Lives have been: See whether ye have answer'd these great Blessings: Be ever mindful of St. Leo's Exhortation. *O Christian Soul, acknowledge thy Dignity; and now thou art raised to the Participation of the Divine Nature, scorn to degenerate, or to return by Sin to thy former Baseness.*

23d Day. *On the Birth of our Lord.*

REFLECTION II.

IN the Reign of *Augustus Cæsar*, Emperor of the World; in the Reign of *Herod the Great*, King of *Judea*, our merciful *Redeemer* was born at *Bethlehem*. Stop my Soul; behold the eternal *Word* for thy Sake born an Infant-Child; adore the *Heavenly Babe*; why art

art thou so backward? Do'st thou not hear the Quire of Angels saluting him with their Carols? Join with them in a *Glory be to God on high*: (Luke 2.) Do'st thou not see the early Shepherds paying him their Homages? With an humble Zeal fail not to accompany them.

How thick do the *Tears* gush from our dear Saviour's *Eyes*! Ah! Christians, he cries for us. Happy Tears, more moving than the Tongues of Men and Angels; happy Tears, more prevailing with Heaven than all the Penitential Psalms of *David*, or Lamentations of *Jeremy*; happy Tears, which cry much louder, and in a sweeter Strain, than the Blood of *Abel*.

Now is the time to sue for Mercy: True it is, *Heaven is the Seat of our dear Lord*; there an Acces for the Sinner is somewhat hard: We shall appear before him at the last Day; but as *Criminals* to be judg'd; we may behold him in our Churches, and in our Tabernacles, it is true; but there he is so *sollicitous* for the Honour of the Place, that a little profane Behaviour will raise his Zeal; but if we take him at *Bethlehem*, here is no such thing; the most outrageous Sinner may have free Acces: Let his Passions be as wild as the Wind, let his Heart be as hard as Stone, *Jesus* can mollify it: Here it is the *Heavens flow with Honey*.

Examine yourselves, and see you are well prepar'd to receive your Saviour. Cut off all disorderly Affections to the World: Curb your

Passions, and root out *Sin* by a sincere Repentance: Nothing but *Sin* can render you disagreeable to *Jesus*.

24th Day. On our Saviour in the Stable.

REFLECTION III.

JESUS was born in a *Stable*, because there was no *Place* for him in an *Inn*. (Luke 2.) Is it possible that the *Saviour* of the *World* should be deprived of the Benefit of a *Night's Lodging*? A ruinous *Stable*! No better Accommodation for the *God of Heaven and Earth*! for him who has the *Treasures* of the *World* at his Command! No better *Company* than an *Ox* and *Ass*, when he has Legions of *Angels* to wait his Pleasure!

O *Jesus*, I see the *Reason* of all this: Thou art born in a *Stable* to confound our *Pride*, to disengage our *Hearts* from the *Things* of this *World*, and to fix them upon the eternal *Joys* of *Heaven*. Alas! how often hast thou knock'd at the *Door* of my *Heart* for a *Lodging*, and I have still refused it thee! How often have I drove thee out, when thou hast been there, to admit *Sin* and the *Vanities* of the *World*! O! grant that I may now effectually receive thee, and never be so ungrateful as to exclude thee more. Come *blessed Lady*, bring thy *Infant* hither; he shall be better lodg'd than in a ruin'd *Stable*.

Learn

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of Heart. (Mat. 11.) These, Christians, are the first Lessons our Saviour teaches us in the Stable of Bethlehem; and do we practise them? Are we *humble*, when in Thought, Word, and Deed, and in our best Actions, we are grasping after the Applause of Men? Are we *meek*, when we can't receive a Contradiction, and are ever grumbling upon the least Disappointment? No, we don't practise the Lessons taught us in the *Stable*.

Examine yourselves, and now, for all, resolve to embrace the Virtues of *Humility* and *Meekness*, which your *Infant Jesus* teaches you from the *Stable*. Whatever you want, earnestly ask for it at this Time of *Mercy*: It is a Time, wherein your *Jesus* is so weakend with Love, that he can deny you nothing.

25th, Or CHRISTMAS-DAY.

On our Saviour in the Manger.

REFLECTION IV.

A *Manger for the Redeemer of the World!*
A *Manger* for our great *God*, in whose *Presence* the Pillars of *Heaven* tremble; and at whose *Feet* the awful *Angels* lie prostrate!
A Manger his Cradle! Straw his Sheets! Rags his Swadling-Cloaths! No better *Furniture* in the deepest *Cold of Winter!* No warmer Cloathing

Cloathing for him, who cloaths the *Birds of the Air*, the *Beasts of the Earth*, and all *Mankind*!

Sweetest Saviour, methinks I hear thee calling aloud from the *Crib*; ye Rich of the World, learn of me *Poverty of Spirit*; and you that are poor, not to repine at your low Condition: Learn *Humility*, when you see I am become a Companion to Beasts: Learn to be *patient*, seeing me exposed to the Rigour of the Element: Learn the *Love* of your Neighbour, since I am made *Man* to save your *Souls*: Learn to *contemn* the *World* as I have done.

Dear *Jesus*, we do hear thy Voice, but can do nothing without the Help of thy *Grace*: Establish it, we beseech thee, in us helpless Creatures, that we may vigorously carry on the Work of our *Redemption* thou hast so happily begun; that we may renounce all *Vanity*, mortify our Passions, deny our Wills, bear our *Crosses*, love our Neighbour, and in all our Works seek thy *Glory*. Thus, my Soul, wilt thou begin a *Christmas*, which shall never end.

Examine yourselves, and reflect how many *Christmases* you have pass'd over unregarded; how many you have consecrated to *Gluttony* and *Excess*, instead of *Love* and *Gratitude*: At this Time, for all, reform past Abuses: Since your *Infant Jesus* challenges your Affections, generously surrender them, by transcribing his *Virtues* into the Copy of your Lives.

26th Day.

26th Day. On St. Stephen.

R E F L E C T I O N .

S T. Stephen was the *first* that died a *Martyr* for the Faith of *Christ*. (Acts 7.) The Time, Place, his Courage, the Instruments of his Death, all concurred to render his *Martyrdom* the more illustrious. His Death was soon after the Crucifixion of our Lord; *Jerusalem* was the Place of it, one of the greatest Theatres of the World; his Courage shew'd itself in baffling the Learned, and patiently submitting to the Fury of the Ignorant; a *Discharge* of Stones was the Instrument of his Death.

No wonder, great *Saint*, that you did *Signs* and *Wonders* among the People, having thus maintained the Cause of *Christ*: No wonder you were so full of Grace and Charity, when so full of Faith: You have truly deserved to see the Heavens open, and *Jesus at the Right-hand of his Father*, ready to crown your Conquests. Christians, let us honour this *first Martyr*.

Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge, (Acts 7.) was the dying Prayer of this glorious *Saint*. O the Effects of a perfect Charity! His Prayer was heard; it soon after wrought the Conversion of *Saul*, who wounded him with the Hands of all that stoned him. Are we prepared to die for *Christ*, when we daily ply under some *Cross* or other, and every little Disappointment frets us? Do we imitate St.

Stephen,

Stephen, in praying for our Enemies, while our Hearts are full of Resentments and Revenge? When, instead of patiently receiving the Stones thrown at us, we send them back with a greater Fury?

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to imitate St. Stephen's Courage, and Love for his Neighbour: Chuse him for your Patron; he is a powerful Advocate: Nothing can be deny'd him now, since, while upon Earth, he did Signs and Wonders among the People. (Acts 6.)

27th Day. On St. John the Evangelist.

REFLECTION.

ST. John, the Son of Zebedee, and Brother to St. James the Elder, was called to the Apostleship by Jesus Christ: He was called in the Flower of his Age; at a Time, when Nature is bent on Pleasures, and most averse to the Rigours of Penance: This notwithstanding, he left the World, his Nets, and Friends, and with his Brother James ever after remain'd a Disciple of Christ. The Holy Ghost calls upon us every Day of our Lives; let us listen to him, the Happiness of our Souls depends upon it.

St. John was the beloved Disciple of our Lord: He was favoured with the Sight of the most remarkable Passages of his Master's Life: He saw his Transfiguration upon Mount Thabor: He made up one of the Number at his last Supper; and had the

Privilege

Privilege to lean upon his dear Lord's *Breast*. Great Saint ! what Rays of Love must dart from thy *Saviour* to thy Virgin Heart ! It must be melted with *Love* : What qualify'd thee for receiving so great a Favour ? Thy unspotted *Chastity*. It was that *Purity of Heart*, without which no Man shall see God. What are our Hearts ? Are they not defiled with beastly Impieties ? Don't they criminally lust after the Love of Creatures ? This is not to imitate St. *John*.

St. *John* would have died like the rest of the Apostles, had not God delivered him from the Vessel of *boiling Oil*, into which he was cast : He wrote the *Gospel*, and therefore is called an *Evangelist* : He left us *three Epistles*, and his *Divine Revelations*. *My Children, love one another*, was his constant Exhortation : Let us endeavour to practise this *Golden Rule*.

Examine yourselves, and endeavour to tread the Steps of St. *John Evangelist*. Pray for those that teach and read his *Gospel*, that they may profit by it. Imitate his *Chastity*, and *Love of Jesus*.

28th Day. *On Holy Innocents.*

R E F L E C T I O N .

THE barbarous *Herod*, who had impiously usurp'd the Crown of *Judea*, and whose jealous and proud Spirit ever trembled at the thoughts of a Successor, hearing there was born

born a King of the Jews, within the Territories of Bethlehem, gave Orders that all the Male Children thereabout, from two Years old and downward should be put to death, that he might be sure not to miss of the Infant Jesus. (Mat. 2.) Bloody Herod, in vain hast thou sought thy young Lord's Life; thy Malice can't prevail against the Power of Heaven; the innocent Blood thou hast spilt shall, like the Blood of Abel, demand Vengeance against thee.

It must be a lamentable Prospect, to see these innocent Babes torn from the grasping Arms of their Parents, and cruelly ripped up before their Eyes: How many were stabbed in the very Embraces of their Mother! How many Mothers, interposing themselves, had their own Blood mixed with that of their Infants! A Voice was heard in Rama, of much Weeping and Lamentation; Rachel mourning for her Children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. (Mat. 2.) Bethlehem, thou hast far more reason to rejoice than weep, seeing thou hast offered so early a Sacrifice to thy Redeemer. How many of thy Children are now Saints in Heaven, who, had they lived, might with their Fathers have crucify'd their Jesus, and been unhappy Victims to the Flames of Hell.

Have we taken part in Herod's Massaere? Innocents may be murder'd by sinful Enticements, by a scandalous Life, by excessive Fondness, undue Education, and in being suffer'd

suffer'd to grow up in an unfortunate Ignorance.

Examine yourselves, and see if you stand guilty of Sins and Murders of this nature. Desire the *Holy Innocents* to intercede for you, in order to obtain or preserve the Grace of Innocence. *Unless ye are become like little Children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Mat. 18.)

29th Day. On St. Thomas of Canterbury.

REFLECTION.

ST. Thomas was born at London; his singular Endowments in Piety and Learning raised him to the Dignity of Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of England. He zealously perform'd the Functions of a good Pastor: He so resolutely maintain'd the Privileges of the Church, that neither the Menaces of his Prince, nor the Sollicitations of his Friends, nor his own Misfortunes, nor Death itself, could make him give up the Cause of God and the Church. A rare Example of Holy Resolution!

Christians, it is our Duty to espouse the Cause of *Jesus Christ*; our Creation, Redemption, baptismal Promises, our eternal Interests oblige us to it; and yet can we say, the Threats, and Charms, and Sollicitations of the World prevail not over *Duty*? Alas! how often do we abandon our good Resolutions, through a too yielding Temper to the Impor-

Importunities of Friends! How often, out of a cowardly Fear of what the *World* will say, do we basely betray the Cause of *Christ*! This is not to imitate the unshaken Resolution of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

St. Thomas, after a hard and afflicting *Banishment*, was recalled home; but, as it proved, to die a *Martyr*: He was, in a short time after, murder'd in his Cathedral Church, at *Eve-song*. How did he die? *Why*, said he to his Clergy, *do you guard the Doors?* Is the *Church* a *Garrison*? Let my *Executioners* in; I am prepared to submit my Head to their Swords for the *Church* of God. Thus did he die. Great *Saint*, we are amazed at your undaunted *Courage*: O! that we could but imitate it! We fear there has long continu'd a *Scourge* upon our *Isle* for shedding your Blood.

Examine yourselves, and see if your Lives have had any *Resemblance* with the Life of St. Thomas. Beseech him to assist you, and your afflicted Country, miserably overgrown with the *Tares* of Sin: He is your *Patron*.

31st Day. On St. Silvester.

R E F L E C T I O N .

ST. Silvester was Bishop of *Rome*. In his Time was the *Church* restored to *Peace* by *Constantine the Great*, after three hundred Years *Persecution*: Now were the *Idols* thrown down, and *Churches* built to the Living *God*; now did those *Saints*, who had hid

hid themselves in *Rocks and Caves*, publickly and freely preach the *Faith of Christ*. O God, we give thee *Thanks*, that thou hast establish'd thy *Church*, and made us Sinners a part of it: We might have been lost in Infidelity, hadst thou not at this time appeared to the World. Thou hast mercifully overthrown the *Idols* of Unbelievers; grant that we may never set up *any* in our Hearts.

Christians, do we carry no *Idol* in our Breasts? Have we never sacrificed to Pride, Ambition, Gluttony, or Lust? Have we no darling Sin that we make an *Idol* of? Have we erected no Altar to a vain World? We may assure ourselves, the heathenish Gods are less provoking.

It is to St. *Silvester's* Zeal that we, in a great measure, owe the Condemnation of the impious *Arius's* Blasphemies: Let us join in his Condemnation by a Life of Humility, Self-denial, and Obedience; it is *Faith* and a *good Life* that must espouse the Cause of *Jesus Christ*: Let me have Faith strong enough to move Mountains; *without Charity I am nothing*. St. *Silvester*, having govern'd the *Church* with great Prudence and Piety for many Years, at length render'd up to God his blessed Soul in Peace. O glorious Confessor, pray for us.

Examine yourselves, and beseech this *Saint* and *Pastor* of Souls to pray for the *Flock* he has left behind him. See what Benefit ye have made of the Divine Graces, and beg pardon for your past Ingratitude. Effectually now resolve to end, with the Year, all the Disorders of it.

A TABLE of the Reflections.

THE Preface - - - - Page 2
A Brief Method of Meditation - 11

For JANUARY and JULY.

Days.	Pages.	Days.	Pages.
1 O n the End of Man	33	16 On Predestination	57
2 On serving God	35	17 On the Vanity of the World	59
3 On the Dignity of a Christian	36	18 On the Wickedness of the World	61
4 On the Duties of a Christian	38	19 On the Deceitfulness of the World	62
5 On the Character of a Christian	40	20 On a Separation from the World	64
6 On Self-knowledge	41	21 On a Heart divided betwixt God and the World	66
7 On the Promises made at Baptism	43	22 On worldly Sollicitude	68
8 On the Affair of Salvation	45	23 On Providence	69
9 On our greatest Affair	46	24 On bad Company	71
10 On our only Affair	48	25 On pious Conversation	73
11 On the Difficulty of Salvation	50	26 On Discourse	74
12 On the Possibility of being saved	51	27 On Temptation	76
13 On the Means of Salvation	53	28 On resisting Temptation	77
14 On the small Number of the Elect	54	29 On Time	79
15 On the very small Number of the Elect	56	30 On redeeming lost Time	80
		31 On Reflecting	82

For FEBRUARY and AUGUST.

1 O n the Shortness of human Life	84	6 On the Death of the Just	92
2 On the Miseries of Life	86	7 On the Examination at Judgment.	93
3 On the Certainty of Death	87	8 On the Sentence of the Reprobate	95
4 On the Uncertainty of Death	89	9 On the Sentence of the Elect	96
5 On the Death of the Sinner	90	10 On	



Days.
 10 O
 11 O
 12 O
 13 O
 14 O
 15 O
 16 O
 17 O
 18 O
 19 O
 20 O
 21 O
 22 O
 23 O
 24 O
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 84 O
 85 O
 86 O
 87 O
 88 O
 89 O
 90 O
 91 O
 92 O
 93 O
 94 O
 95 O
 96 O
 97 O
 98 O
 99 O
 100 O

A T A B L E.

Days.	Pages.	Days.	Pages.
10 On the Pain of Sense in Hell	98	18 On the Effects of Sin in the Soul of Man	110
11 On the Pain of the Damn'd	99	19 On Venial Sin	112
12 On the Pains of Purgatory	100	20 On Pride	113
13 On the Souls in Purgatory	102	21 On Vain-glory	114
14 On the Bliss of Heaven	103	22 On Anger	116
15 On the Occasions of Sin	105	23 } On Impurity	118
16 On the Grievousness of Mortal Sin	106	24 }	119
17 On the Hatred God bears to Sin	108	25 On Drunkenness	121
		26 On Envy	122
		27 On Sloth	124
		28 On Lukewarmness	125
		29 On the Marks of Lukewarmness	127
		30 On Despair	129
		31 On Presumption	130

For MARCH and SEPTEMBER.

1 O n the scandalous Sinner	133	15 On the Advantages of Prayer	156
2 On the Sin of Scandal	134	16 On the Conditions of Prayer	158
3 On the Danger of a Relapse	136	17 On Distractions in Prayer	159
4 On the Relapsing Sinner	138	18 On Morning-Prayer	161
5 On Rash Judgment	139	19 On the vain Excuses of the World in Point of Prayer	162
6 On Detraction	141	20 On Meditation	164
7 On Swearing	142	21 On the Practice of Meditation	166
8 On Curseing	146	22 On Motives for Fasting	167
9 On Repentance	147	23 On the Method of Fasting	169
10 On the Delay of Repentance	149	24 On Alms-Deeds	170
11 On Death-bed Repentance	150	25 On Spiritual Alms-Deeds	172
12 On Resolutions of Amendment	152	26 On a pure Intention	173
13 On the Necessity of good Works	153	27 On human Respects	175
14 On the Necessity of Prayer	155	28 On	

A T A B L E.

Days.	Pages.	Days.	Pages.
28 On what the World will say	176	30 On Recollection of Spirit	179
29 On Divine Inspirations	178	31 On pious Ejaculations	181

For APRIL and OCTOBER.

1 O N Sadness	183	17 On the Word of God	208
2	184	18 On hearing the Word of God	209
3 On the Obligations of Pa- rents and Masters	186	19 On keeping the Sunday	211
4 On the Duties of Children and Servants	188	20 On Devotion	213
5 On the Mass	189	21 On Devotion to our Lady	214
6 On hearing Mass	191	22 On Devotion to the Saints	216
7 On Confession	193	23 On Fervour in Devotion	217
8 On frequent Confession	194	24 On Coldness in Devotion	219
9 On Preparations to Con- fession	196	25 On Spiritual Dryness	220
10 On the Method of Con- fession	197	26 On Grace	222
11 On Defects in Confession	199	27 On a Corresponding with Grace	223
12 On the Blessed Eucharist	200	28 On the Abuse of Grace	225
13 On Christ inviting us to himself in the Eucharist	202	29 On the Uncertainty of Grace	226
14 On frequent Communion	203	30 On choosing a State of Life	228
15 On Preparations to Com- munion	205	31 On the Rules for choosing a state of Life	229
16 On an unworthy Com- munion	206		

For MAY and NOVEMBER.

1 O N an Ecclesiastical State	231	6 On Acts of Patience	240
2 On a marry'd Life	233	7 On voluntary Suffering	241
3 On Virginity	235	8 On a Christian Confor- mity to the Will of God	243
4 On Suffering	237	9 On Conforming ourselves to the Will of God	244
5 On the Advantages of Suf- fering	238	10 On	

A T A B L E.

Pages.	Pages.	Pages.	Pages.
10 On the Example of Christ	246	18 On Perfection	258
11 On the Imitation of Christ	247	19 On the way to Perfection	260
12 On the Conformity of a Christian to the Life of Christ	249	20 On the inward Man	261
13 On the Love of Christ	250	21 On Silence	263
14 On a Confidence in Christ	252	22 On Solitude	264
15 On the Price of a Soul	253	23 On the Peace of a Christian	266
16 On a Soul that has thrown herself into the Arms of her Creator	255	24 On the Means of acquiring true Peace	267
17 On the Breathings of a Soul in Union with her God	257	25 On a good Conscience	269
		26 On a virtuous Life	270
		27 On Faith	272
		28 On the Gift of Faith	273
		29 On Acts of Faith	275
		30 On Motives of Fear	276
		31 On Motives of Hope	278

For JUNE and DECEMBER.

1 O N the Love of God	280	16 On Obedience to God	303
2 On Acts of Love	281	17 On Obedience to Superiors	305
3 On the Marks of true Love	283	18 On Blind Obedience	306
4 On the Love of our Neighbour	284	19 On Prudence	308
5 On the Rules of Charity	286	20 On Justice	309
6 On forgiving Injuries	287	21 On Fortitude	311
7 On fraternal Correction	289	22 On Temperance	312
8 On Humility	291	23 On the Presence of God	313
9 On Motives of Humility	292		314
10 On the Advantages of Humility	294	24 Ibid.	315
11 On the Character of an humble Christian	295	25 Ibid.	317
12 On Meekness	297	26 On the Benefit of our Creation	318
13 On Poverty	298	27 On the Benefit of our Conservation	320
14 On Chastity	300	28 On the Benefit of our Redemption	321
15 On Modesty	301	29 On the Benefit of our Vocation	323
		30 On Perseverance	325

A T A B L E

A TABLE of the APPENDIX.

Days.	Pages.	Days.	Pages.
<i>Jan. 1.</i> O n the Circum-		<i>Corpus-Christi.</i> On the Insti-	
cision of our		tution of the Holy Sacra-	
Lord	327	ment	362
2 On the Name of Jesus	329	<i>June 24.</i> On St. John the	
6 On the Epiphany	303	Baptist	364
7 On the Offerings of the		29 On St. Peter and St. Paul	
three Kings	332	Apostles	366
<i>Feb. 2.</i> On the Purification		<i>July 25.</i> On James Ap.	368
of our Lady	333	26 On St. Anne	370
<i>24</i> On St. Matthias Apostle	335	<i>Aug. 10.</i> On St. Lawrence	371
<i>Afb-Wed.</i> On Lent	336	15 On the Assumption of	
<i>March 19.</i> On St. Joseph	338	our Lady	373
25 On the Annunciation of		24 On St. Bartholomew	374
our Lady	340	<i>September 8.</i> On the Nativity	
<i>Tuesday in H. Week.</i> On Je-		of our Lady	376
sus in the Garden	341	21 On St. Matthew	377
<i>Wednesday.</i> On Jesus in the		29 On St. Michael	379
Court of the H. P ^t .	343	<i>October 28.</i> On St. Simon and	
<i>Thursday.</i> On Jesus arraing'd		Jude	380
before Pilate	344	<i>Nov. 1.</i> On all Saints	382
<i>Frid.</i> On Jesus upon Mount		2 On all Souls	383
Calvary	346	30 On St. Andrew Ap.	385
<i>Saturday.</i> On Jesus in the		<i>Advent Sunday.</i> On Advent	
Grave	348		386
<i>Easter Day.</i> On the Resur-		<i>December 8.</i> On the Concep-	
rection of our Lord	349	tion of our Lady	388
<i>Apr. 23.</i> On St. Geo. M.	351	21 On St. Thomas Ap.	389
<i>May 1.</i> On St. Philip and		22 On the Incarnation of	
James Apostles	352	our Lord	391
3 On the Finding of the		23 On His Birth	392
Holy Cross	354	24 On our Saviour in the	
<i>Holy Thursday.</i> On the Af-		Stable	394
ception of our Lord	356	25 On our Saviour in the	
<i>Whit-Sunday.</i> On the De-		Manger	395
scence of the Holy Ghost	357	26 On St. Stephen	397
<i>Whit-Monday.</i> On the Ef-		27 On St. John Evangelist	
fects of the Coming of the			398
Holy Ghost	359	28 On Holy Innocents	400
<i>Trinity Sunday.</i> On the Blei-		29 On St. Thomas of Canter-	
fed Trinity	361	bury	401
		31 On St. Silvester	402

F I N I S.



K.

Pages.	
Insti-	
cra-	
362	
n the	
364	
Paul	
366	
368	
370	
ce 371	
on of	
373	
' 374	
tivity	
376	
377	
379	
n and	
380	
382	
383	
. 385	
dvent	
386	
ncep-	
388	
. 389	
n of	
391	
392	
n the	
394	
u the	
395	
397	
gelift	
398	
400	
inter-	
401	
402	